

AIMS, MOTIVES, AND REASONS

by

JOHN JESTYN JENKINS



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PREFATORY NOTE

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Brief book-references are contained in foot-notes throughout the text. More detailed references are supplied in the Bibliography which is on page 217.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is intended primarily as an attempt at clarifying some of the traditional theories and concepts connected with the concept of motivation. It has stemmed, naturally enough, from an initial interest in the topic for its own sake, but this interest has rapidly developed into a strong sense of dissatisfaction with those theories which claim to advance an exhaustive account of the topic, when they have really only touched on one or two (albeit important) aspects of the general problem. The result is a piece of work which may well give the impression of being essentially both negative and critical. I cannot accept that this is really so. Admittedly, there are places in what follows where I have not had the confidence to substitute for the particular theory which has been criticised a satisfactory alternative account; but then to demand that one should do so suggests the assumption that concepts in general - and perhaps the concept of motivation in particular - find their application within certain fairly narrowly defined boundaries. Wittgenstein convincingly showed, in connection with the concept of a game, that we need not suppose that an activity has any one defining characteristic in order to qualify for inclusion under a certain concept. The concept of motive is not quite in this

category, but we ought, I think, to be led by Wittgenstein's example to be on our guard against any suggestion that the concept is easily locatable by reference to a few simple paradigms.

But it is not only the case, with respect to the theories which have been considered, that I want to say 'But the meaning of motive is not exhausted in this account, for look at this situation.... ': I want further to make it obvious, by giving each chapter a fairly independent treatment, that it will often be inappropriate to describe a theory of motivation as wrong, or misleading, or even inadequate - even though on independent grounds it may be so. What one may want to say is that the account satisfies an enquiry into human behaviour, either in the general or in the particular, at a certain level. Of course it is true, as we shall see in Chapter II for example, that many motives name a disposition, a propensity, or a tendency which will find expression in a law-like proposition. But to proffer such a proposition in an attempt to explain someone's action is not always either a welcome or a helpful gesture. We may be more anxious to discover the immediate reason why the agent did what he did, and perhaps why he did it at that moment and not at any other. There will be times when the answer to this kind of enquiry will be in the nature of a causal account, where such an account cannot be substituted for the statement of a man's motive. But

not all 'immediate' reasons for action will fall into this class, as some of the examples of Chapters I, III, and V may help to demonstrate.

Then again, I have argued in the latter part of Chapter III that motives or reasons for action must often be seen as derivable from the social context in which one finds oneself, that it is thus that they gain their explanatory value (a view which has been foreshadowed in the concluding sections of Chapter II); but it hardly needs stating that there is a distinction between this question and the question of what function a man is performing when he asserts his own or another's motive. These are just two ways of approaching the general topic, and one need not assume that they encroach upon one another.

The notion of clarification often provokes, especially among antagonists of linguistic philosophy, accusations of presumption. I do not see myself called upon to defend my general approach: it already occupies a comfortable position well within the boundaries of philosophy. But one might say of the claim to clarify that this may be justified on the general ground that understanding a concept is not just a matter of knowing how to use a word correctly: for this purpose a dictionary would adequately suffice. It is rather a matter, from a philosophical point of view, of being able to draw out the implications of its use. It is one thing to be told that a

motive is the reason which an agent gives to explain his action, but it is philosophically more interesting to discuss, for example, whether acting from a motive is a criterion for saying that a person decided or chose to do what he did. This is a question with which Chapter I is primarily concerned, and it is further discussed in the earlier section of Chapter VI. Then again, are we to say that in acting from a motive a man is necessarily aware of what he is doing? And what are the differences between acting from a motive and acting from force of habit? These are questions which can be answered not by abstract examination of concepts (if this was ever a meaningful notion in any case) but by looking at situations in the concrete and considering the kind of statements a man makes in answer to enquiries of this or that kind. The second part of Chapter VI is an extended empirical investigation of this nature in which I have given a fairly detailed account of certain sections of Francois Mauriac's novel Therese in order to illustrate how the motivated and the intended gradually blurs into the unmotivated and the unintended.

This, then, is primarily what a claim to clarification amounts to in this context. One might note in connection with it how Ryle expresses the position in the introduction to The Concept of Mind:

"It is one thing to know how to apply such concepts, quite another to know how to correlate them with one another and with concepts of other sorts. Many people can

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talk sense with concepts but cannot talk sense about them; they know by practice how to operate with concepts, anyhow inside familiar fields, but they cannot state the logical regulations governing their use. They are like people who know their way about their own parish, but cannot construct or read a map of it, much less a map of the region or continent in which their parish lies."

The charge of presumption cannot therefore be applicable here, simply because it is not the aim of this kind of philosophy to show how a particular concept ought to be employed: it is not, in other words, a list of instructions for its use - indeed, it could not constitute such, for the programme as a whole has to presuppose that the concept under discussion is already a working one.

The more general charge, perhaps consequent upon this previous one, is that the conclusions, such as they are, are therefore of no practical value. This point really turns upon what one takes a process of clarification to be; whether it is always to be seen as a means to some further purpose which is in itself considered to be of practical value, or whether the process carries its own justification. But this whole issue ultimately reverts to the general defense of linguistic philosophy - of the techniques of which I take this present thesis to be representative - and it has already been implied that this is not the proper context in which to uphold its merits.

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It will be noted that the content of some of the chapters is not always obviously related to the discussion of 'motive', as such. There are three things which I want to say in connection~~y~~ with this. In the first place, there are certain cases where only by discussing at length some important features of a closely related concept can one hope to determine or draw attention to a certain characteristic either of motives or of motivated action. Thus Chapter I contains a lengthy pre-amble upon the concept of decision, and some later sections (some of which are partly speculative) upon the concept of action; and in both Chapters V and VI a good deal of space is devoted to the concept of intention. But secondly, I had never had it in mind that the work should centre exclusively upon the concept of motive proper. I have taken the concept of motivation (as opposed to the concept of motive) in a sufficiently wide sense to include such kindred topics as those of intention, decision, choice, habit, wanting, etc., all of which have this in common, that they may sometimes and in some contexts be invoked to explain human behaviour. They are in general the kind of things which (metaphorically) bring actions into being. To this extent, their inclusion is justified. And thirdly, it has to be admitted that, from a personal point of view, the discussion of motives proper somehow naturally led into a discussion of these further mentioned topics. This may or may not be a bad thing in itself; but it may be said in general of

their inclusion that they serve to relieve the monotony which might otherwise have characterised a detailed linguistic analysis of motives alone.

The parts of this thesis which have been accepted for publication are Chapters IV and V. The former is to appear in Mind under the title "Dr. Peters' 'Motives'", while the latter is shortly due to appear in The Philosophical Quarterly, its title unaltered. Both papers have been modified to some extent for presentation in article^t form.

MOTIVE, ACTION, AND DECISION

Philosophical literature, especially that which has appeared in the last decade or so, is riddled with attempts at providing a simple definition of, or criteria for, action, motivation, and related concepts. It will be one of the aims of this thesis to show that this is not easily achieved. But if it is thus a mistake to suppose, notwithstanding a fairly comprehensive account of the topics involved, that one can produce such a definition, it is perhaps a philosophical sin to arrive in the field holding certain unquestioned presuppositions about the subject. Nowell-Smith, it seems to me, has committed this kind of sin. I shall be dwelling at length in this chapter upon certain comments which he makes, not so much from a desire to criticise Nowell-Smith in particular but rather with a view to 'broadening out' the topic and preparing the ground for a discussion of further treatments of the topic in subsequent chapters.

"A motiveless action", Nowell-Smith maintains, "...is logically impossible; for it is not something ^{that} ~~which~~ a man could be said to 'decide' or 'choose' to do and so would not count as an 'action'".¹ Two assumptions are involved here, both of which I shall want to challenge: (1) All actions are decided upon or chosen, and (2) a so-called motiveless action could not be said to be chosen or decided upon. I shall turn

¹.
'Ethics'. Penguin edition.p.I24.

to the second of these assumptions first.

There is a large variety of actions which one may, under certain circumstances, wish to describe as motiveless. These range from those done out of force of habit (though these are not by definition motiveless) to those of the performance of which the agent is thoroughly aware. The former will be dealt with in detail in Chapter III. In the present chapter, I shall be more particularly concerned with the latter. These fall into that class of actions to which the appropriate reply to a request for explanation or justification is 'There was no reason', or 'I just felt like doing so', or 'I just wanted to'. These are common modes of reply, the effect of which is first of all to assert the agent's awareness of what he was doing, and secondly to deny that he had a reason, in the accepted sense, for doing it. It is this kind of action which Nowell-Smith relegates to the sphere of the logically impossible; and he does so not simply, it must be noted, as a result of a bland denial that a person may act with no reason but rather because an action which cannot be said to have a reason or motive cannot genuinely be classed as an action either. An action which has no reason could not have been decided upon, or chosen, and thus does not count as an action, for the notion of decision or choice requires to be linked with 'reasons for acting'.

One may, under the guise of a very 'general' conception

of motivation, regard as venial the statement that a motiveless action is logically impossible (an issue which will be discussed below²); it is the explicit definition of action, upon which this statement is founded, which calls for immediate comment. From one point of view it is evident that candidates for motiveless actions can be decided upon or chosen. I may decide, for example, to take a walk in the park and in answer to a person who asks me why I decided to do so I may, in all seriousness, say 'There was no reason; I just felt like doing so'. I may decide to go to the theatre, to take a motor-ride, to do a crossword-puzzle, to sketch a cathedral tower, to listen to the wireless..... all for no reason at all. There is no pre-eminent example of an action, pure and simple, any more than there is one pre-eminent example of a motive. The above are examples of actions; they may have been decided upon, they may not. The field of human activity is, as we shall see, a highly complex field in which all sorts of things count as actions, and all sorts of things as reasons, causes, motives, and explanations. We must not expect to find the type of consistency and cut-and-dried thinking which Nowell-Smith would have us find there.

But of course it is not enough merely to quote a few random examples of the way in which the word 'decide' is frequently used. Nowell-Smith could well argue that these cases

². p. 19.

indicate only a 'loose' or imprecise use of the word and that they do not exemplify the act of deciding at all. It will therefore be helpful to examine more closely the concept of decision.

To suppose that the above examples reflect a weak sense of deciding would presumably be to assume that the genuine process is something more complex; to suggest, perhaps, that it must always involve some inner mental process, a kind of deliberating, or choosing between alternatives. Yet it is clear that if these are to be established as necessary criteria for saying that a person has decided, one common use of the concept will now be considerably restricted. It is probably true to say that in most cases, when a person states that he has decided to do something, he is merely expressing his intention to do it, and is far from wishing to convey by his statement that he has been deliberating about what it is that he intends doing. To ask a person whether or not he has reached a decision regarding the performance of a certain action is often a way of asking whether or not, all other conditions being equal, the action~~s~~ will be performed. It is sometimes - but only sometimes - an enquiry into whether or not the agent has deliberated, thought, worked it out, etc. Even in cases where deciding clearly involves choosing between a number of alternatives, it is not necessary - and

indeed it often makes little sense - to assume an inner process of deciding. A person may, upon being presented with two or more courses of action, immediately say that he has decided, or that he has already made his decision.

It is true that we sometimes use the present participle to express deliberation. Thus if a person is said to be deciding, we regard him as weighing up the pros and cons, now thinking of this course of action, now of that. But it is all too tempting to draw what would be a misleading implication from this. 'Deciding' is an 'achievement' word which has certain important similarities with the concept of winning. It might be argued that a person cannot truly be said to be winning a race if it is not already clear that he cannot lose. Of course, we might say, in reply to a request for information regarding someone's activity, 'He is busy winning the race' or simply 'He is winning the race', but this would normally express our confidence in his winning. Our saying this meaningfully is dependent upon the assumption that he cannot or will not fail, that nothing can now impede his progress. But in fact he is not really winning at all: he is performing an activity, viz running the race, which is logically (though, as we have seen, not metaphorically) distinct from the descriptions 'winning' or 'losing'.

Again, someone may say, during the race, 'He is winning now', and it is true that the word is now being used in

something more than a metaphorical sense; but this can be achieved only by invocation of the assumption that the race ends now - which clearly it does not. It is possible to use the word literally here only by restricting the conditions, the class of rules, which the runner would normally have to fulfil in order to qualify for this description.

Now the concept of deciding might well be analysed along the same lines. We say of a person 'He is deciding', but we do so, I am suggesting, only in the light of the assumption that he will reach a decision; but reaching-a-decision is not part of what goes on before one reaches whatever it is that constitutes a decision. There are no half-measures: we cannot say 'He is deciding, and is now half-way there - the process does not represent a progression of this sort. When we say 'He has won the race', we do not mean to imply that he was winning it all along: he won it only after he had run a certain distance and had passed certain people on the way. Similarly, the statement 'He has decided' does not imply that he was deciding all along, even if the decision was preceded by a period of concentrated deliberation. He did certain other things, namely, weighed the pros and cons, by virtue of which he finally decided. The statement 'He was deciding', used to refer to the period preceding the decision, makes sense because it has now become appropriate to say 'He has decided' or 'He has reached a decision', and the

appropriateness of these latter statements is based upon the fact that the agent is in a position to say what he is going to do.

It is noteworthy that if a person fails to reach a decision, we describe the activity in which he has been engaged not as a case of 'deciding' but as one of 'trying to decide', which emphasises what has already been suggested, that the ultimate criterion for saying that a person has decided is not that he has been deliberating, but that he is able to say what he is going to do. The person who has failed to reach a decision is not in a position to do this. But the remarkable thing about knowing what one is going to do is that one may achieve this state without having deliberated. One often describes oneself as having decided to, e.g. attend a symphony concert, knowing very well that at the time of doing so there was no consideration either of positive alternatives (going to the theatre, visiting a friend) or of the one negative alternative, viz not going to the concert. The situation is one in which I make an immediate, unhesitating, decision.

Of course, this is not enough for the case I wish to put forward. Supporters of the mental-occurrence view may well retort that if the concept of deciding is used in the way in which I propose to use it, it would become very much an umbrella-term which, by virtue of its generality, would no

longer allow for the distinction between deciding to do something and merely doing it. This would not be strictly true. It does not follow, on the present thesis, that everything I do is something which I decided to do. Eliminating the act of deliberating as a necessary requirement for the claim that a person has decided does not thereby eliminate certain other requirements which must indeed be regarded as basic if the concept is to be an operative one at all. We do not decide, for example, to do many actions which are done out of force of habit, nor indeed, it might be argued, do we decide to do many actions which are merely habitual as opposed to being the result of force of habit.^{3.} There is a further class of actions which may loosely be described as absent-minded, to which the application of the term 'decide' is inappropriate; and there is finally that even larger class of actions, covering much in human behaviour, which we describe as impulsive. If one were to extract from the human field the actions which fall into the above classes, it is fairly clear that one would be left with a severely tailored picture. But this is not the important thing. The only actions of which human beings would now be capable would be those of a highly 'rational' nature. This is not to say that people would no longer make wrong or mistaken decisions, but it does mean that where the need for

^{3.} But these statements need to be worked out in detail, a task to which we shall turn in Chapter III.

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action arises, people would in general be aware of, be conscious of, what they were doing. This is not remarkable: it is merely the logical outcome of the elimination of impulsive, absent-minded, action. But this tailored-down picture does allow us to see how, on the present interpretation, a person who decides to do something differs from one who simply does it. It is, on this view, a contingent fact that we do not always employ the word in contexts where it would be appropriate to do so. From the fact that the word is not used on any particular occasion, it does not follow that what the person did was impulsive, absent-minded, habitual, etc.; but the fact of its use would be a sure guarantee of the inapplicability of any of the latter terms. In connection with this point, we should perhaps bear in mind that in recounting or relating our past actions, we frequently use the word in order to give an air of respectability to what we did. We claim that we decided this and that we decided that, thus giving the impression of order and coherency to our behaviour, when in fact we may know that many of these actions were done impulsively. We do not, in doing this, necessarily wish to give the impression that we had considered, or deliberated upon, our actions beforehand, but more importantly that we were aware of what we were doing, that we knew that we were doing it.

One further point should be stressed. It has already been suggested that on the mental-occurrence view of deciding, there

are two ways in which deliberation may take place: the agent may have to decide or choose between a number of positive alternatives, or he may have to decide between doing or not doing just one thing. Now it may be thought that in denying that the former version of deliberation was a necessary requirement for saying that a person had decided, it was not also intended to deny this of the latter. And this may be said partly because the second version may, on the face of it, seem to be a watered-down example of deliberation. This, however, would be misleading. If what I do before acting is to merit the title 'deliberating' at all, there will be no such thing as a watered-down version of it. It is certainly true that for most actions a person freely performs, there was a choice between doing and not doing, but of course it does not follow from the fact that there was a choice in this sense that the agent actually chose between doing or not doing. And if there was not a choice in this latter sense, then it cannot be said that the agent deliberated. After all, so far as choosing between alternatives is concerned, there is no real difference between having two or three positive courses of action, and having one course of action which one has to decide to do or not to do. In both cases, the agent may ponder, pause, hesitate, scratch his head, frown, etc. The real difference is between both of these operations and simply resolving (that is, on the present thesis, 'deciding') to do

something in full awareness of what one is doing. It will be evident, therefore, that neither version of deliberation (so far as we can distinguish them) is to be regarded as a necessary prior activity to deciding.

If we now return to Nowell-Smith's argument, it can be seen that it is dependent upon a mental-occurrence view of deciding.⁴ One can assert that a motiveless action "is not something ~~which~~ ^{that} a man could be said to 'decide' or 'choose' to do" only by assuming that the examples of unmotivated actions considered earlier do not count as cases of deciding (for certainly these are cases in which a man is said to decide). And one can make this assumption only by ignoring the account of deciding which I have tried to expound in the foregoing pages. The consideration of, or the deliberation upon, a proposed course of action in most cases implies the existence of reasons, or of a reason, for doing it. (It would be a matter of small importance - so far as the mental-occurrence view of deciding is concerned - if these could be formulated only after the action had been performed.) And hence it is argued that if a person had a reason for doing what he did then, ipso facto, there was a sense in which he had considered his action beforehand. Nowell-Smith's is thus a restricted conception of deciding which fails to take into account certain

4. There is, it would seem, no independent evidence in the work itself for supposing that he holds this view, but one might suspect a very positive implication to this effect in his remarks upon 'choosing' - the relation between which and deciding he himself describes as one of 'quasi-implication' (p.101) - in the section on 'Choosing and Preferring', Ch.VII, Part II, p.102.

standard uses of the concept. The view that motiveless actions do not occur is, in consequence, a false one.

It was remarked earlier that contained in what Nowell-Smith says is an implicit definition of action as something which has to be decided upon or chosen. This presupposition, like his implicit analysis of the concept of deciding, also suffers from being over-restrictive. It is one which can be advanced only by ignoring the very many examples of behaviour which, despite the fact that they are not chosen or decided upon, normally count as actions without reservation. Perhaps the more obvious and immediate consequence, if we consider this assumption in conjunction with his acceptance of the mental-occurrence view of deciding, is that actions which could have been decided upon according to the broader analysis of the concept are now excluded from the class of things which we call actions. Yet this is a pernicious exclusion, for, among other things, it entails denying the term to pieces of behaviour which, though they were not decided according to Nowell-Smith's view, were nevertheless actions for which we hold the agent fully responsible, and which he did in full awareness of what he was doing. A man may decide, for no reason at all, and without previous deliberation, to eat an apple, to see a film, to read a newspaper. These actions may, but need not be, impulsive, or absent-minded, or done from

force of habit; they may, but need not be, 'considered', or 'deliberated'. More importantly, adopting Nowell-Smith's analysis of deciding, it makes sense to deny that they were decided upon while still maintaining that they were actions. Indeed, to deny that they were actions might in one important sense be to excuse the agent for what he did. One of a number of possible implications of denying that a person has acted would be that he was merely reacting, or, alternatively, that what happened was accidental; and these are both examples of potentially excusable behaviour. But the cases to which reference has been made are those in which the agent has no desire to be excused. He was neither confused about what he did, nor does he misremember it; he did what he did wanting to do it, and not regretting having done it. Nowell-Smith might overcome the difficulty presented by these cases by maintaining that they fulfil the minimum requirement for deciding. That is to say, they are cases in which the agent wanted to do something, and wanting counts as a reason for acting. But this is a somewhat tenuous line of argument. The agent, as we saw,^{5.} uses the fact of his wanting - his wanting and nothing else - to deny that he had a reason for doing what he did. And further, it is a fact about human behaviour that we want, in some sense, to do most of the things we do.

This is something we take for granted, so that when we demand an explanation for a person's action, we are asking for something over and above his wanting.⁶

Some philosophers have argued that though it is true to say that many cases of decision are not immediately preceded by a process of choosing or deliberating, the agent has, nevertheless, at some point in his experience, made an explicit choice which may be said to determine all future actions relevant to it. There is no doubt that some cases of decision are amenable to this kind of analysis but, in the first place, these cases are relatively infrequent and, in the second place, it is not immediately clear that they constitute an objection to the non-mental-occurrence view of deciding. A person might reflect, for example, that he is smoking more than he ought and that he should therefore attempt to reduce the number of cigarettes he smokes per day. In consequence, there may come a time when, upon being offered a cigarette, he refuses, not hesitatingly, but promptly. His refusal may, under such circumstances, be akin to a reflex action such that one cannot maintain that it was the result of immediately prior consideration. Now it has to be said that this at least would not be a precise counter-example, for it is not one in which

⁶ I do not wish to deny, however, that wanting or desiring constitute an important aspect of motivation, when we take this term in its broadest sense (See Introduction p. 6). Indeed, it is in recognition of its importance that I devote the final chapter to an analysis of it.

the agent denies that he had a reason for doing or saying what he did. He does not, upon interrogation, answer that he just did not want a cigarette at that moment for, being the habitual smoker that he was, there was an important sense in which he did want one. In point of fact, he explains his refusal of the offer by reference to the earlier decision or resolution to reduce his consumption. It seems reasonable to assert that most cases of pre-conceived decisions fit this kind of analysis. It is precisely because these are not, originally, candidates for the non-deliberation view of deciding that the analysis is itself inapplicable. Genuine candidates for the latter view are those in which the agent does not and cannot refer to pre-conceived resolutions, cases in which he denies that there was a reason over and above his wanting or not wanting. A person might decide, for example, to attend an organ recital, but, other than the fact that he wanted to do so, there is no logical requirement that he should provide a reason when asked. Of course, it is always true that there are reasons why one decides to do this or that.⁷ His decision to listen to organ music in this case presupposes that he has a liking either for organ music in particular or for music in general. There may be further presuppositions involved, for example that he enjoys ecclesiastical surroundings or even that the solemnity characteristic of organ music is in some way

⁷. In this connection, see Ch.III, pp.107ff

conducive to his temperament. In the same way, there are reasons why he decides to take a walk in the park: he may be the sort of person who enjoys walking in general or walking in parks in particular; or again he may be the sort of person who is dispositionally inclined to indulge in carefree activity, and so on. But in both these examples the reasons cited are not those which the agent himself would supply. He could do so, of course, if he were asked specifically to survey his character objectively in this way; but even then he would have provided no more than a kind of causal explanation of the kind of things that he does, and causal accounts are not the sort of things which provide the material for decision-making. All decisions are naturally made within the framework which is constituted by what we loosely call 'character'. It is in this sense that decisions are a product or a symptom of the collection of attitudes, likes, dislikes, inclinations, etc. which comprise my character.⁸ But there is no sense in which these qualities can provide the ingredients for a conscious decision. In the above example, it is during the course of his intellectual development that the person has come to appreciate organ music, but this was not something for which he was responsible in any positive sense. He did not, at any stage in his experience, decide to like or appreciate it - and even if he could have decided this, the

⁸. Chapter II provides a more exhaustive analysis of some of the points suggested here.

regress to reasons on a mental-occurrence view would still present a problem. His present decision to attend the recital is of course a result of, a product of, his having come to like such music, but it is no more than this. It is based upon neither an isolated nor an episodic occurrence of anterior reflection.

Moreover, even in cases where a person reflects upon alternatives prior to deciding, one could often, in theory, give reasons in terms of character-traits. It is precisely because we do not accept these as being the agents' reasons for deciding what he did decide that it would be odd to emphasise them in cases where the agent clearly repudiates reasons for deciding.⁹

But even if one advances beyond the field of deciding in either of its interpretations, no immediate distinction between what is and what is not action suggests itself. A line of argument which supporters of the Nowell-Smith view might be tempted to use would be to stress the importance of the concealed adjective 'human', as applied to action. Human action would be that kind of behaviour which is marked by a general awareness of one's situation, and in particular that it is behaviour which is preceded by decision or choice, that it is not a mere reaction to stimuli of one sort or another. Any

⁹. This point is to some extent overlapped by the wider question of authority in decisions regarding motives, to which we shall turn in Chapter III.

behaviour which falls short of this is no longer distinctively human as opposed to animal.

This may be one way of looking at the situation. It might perhaps be more realistic to admit that human action is first and foremost that kind of action which human beings practise in a human context, a truism of which we sometimes need to be reminded. The only criterion for saying that it is human as opposed to animal behaviour is the fact that human beings practise it (though, admittedly, in view of what human beings are, this is to say a lot). Actions are essentially things that men do, as opposed to the things that are done to them. It should be neither strange nor degrading to reflect that animals also do things and that some of the things they do are very similar to the things we do. A dog, not unlike his human counterpart, will jump from the path of an oncoming vehicle. Both are acting in so doing, but neither has decided. One might even take some steps towards the undermining of the role of decision as a distinguishing characteristic of human behaviour. Dogs may not have reasons for their actions, but they exhibit certain behaviour which, in human beings (and on external evidence alone), might be described as deciding. The dog is exhibiting the same kind of behaviour when he hovers between two plates of meat, now sniffing at this one, now at that, and finally eating one and not the other as the man who hesitates between taking grapefruit or cereal at breakfast. It

is true that the latter, being a rational creature, may have reasons for his choice, but he need not on any particular occasion. In so far as he does not have reasons, in so far as he is simply attracted to one and not to the other, his action is to that extent indistinguishable, on grounds of classification, from the dog's. If we are prepared to say that the man decided to do what he did, and - despite the fact that the case is being assessed on external evidence alone, we might well say that he decided - then the dog also decided. If the man cannot be said to have decided, then of course this cannot be said of the dog either.

That we sometimes cannot distinguish between animal action and human action should not be a matter for concern; far less should it be made the basis for the view that only action which is the result of decision can really be regarded as action. Quite apart from other considerations, one would have to bear in mind that upon this view of action, certain distinctively human activities such as speaking and thinking would be ruled out. I rarely decide, in Nowell-Smith's sense, to say the things I do say, or to think the things I do think, but unless one adopts a 'physical-movement' conception of action - and to do so would also be to invite the charge of arbitrary definition - one would, for most purposes, have cause to say that I was acting, that, essentially, I was doing things.

There is really no answer to the person who feels obliged

to make a sharp distinction between animal and human behaviour in such a way that the term 'action' is denied to certain things which men do. It is of course easy to see where the dividing line would naturally suggest itself. We know that men are capable of acting for reasons, that they can act in full awareness of what they are doing, and of what the ~~eens~~ consequences of their doing it will be; and we know that animals are, for the most part, not capable of this. But it would be one thing to infer from this that actions which do not fall into the above class are no longer distinctively human; it would be quite another - and a mistaken inference - to deny not only that such behaviour was human but also that it was a case of action at all.

But though one can deny the legitimacy of this latter inference, one cannot (in one sense of 'cannot' anyway) deny a person's right to define human action as he pleases. It can only be pointed out that such an account, if it is committed to ignoring certain cases which we clearly call action - cases in which we want to claim that a man was doing something - is, by its very nature, inadequate. A.I.Melden, talking in a similar context, quite rightly points out that it is "the enormous variety of cases that defeats any attempt to provide a summary account of the nature of action in terms of bodily and psychological factors."¹⁰ He goes on to say: "The

¹⁰. 'Action'. Phil.Rev. Vol.65.p.526, 1956

characteristic philosophic vice of generalizing from special cases is involved in the familiar summary explanation of the concept of action in terms of various psychological factors or processes. Perhaps the most frequent instance is the explanation given in terms of motives, in which the preoccupation with the text-book examples of actions performed with ends in view leads the philosopher to ignore the very many sorts of actions in which no end in view is present at all."⁴¹

The word 'action', it might be argued, is a kind of sophistication whose function in the language it is not easy to define. Perhaps one ought to regard it as being a sociological description, and perhaps as having a meta-linguistic usage, rather than as being itself a linguistic item. We do not commonly ask what action a man performed: we ask what he did. We do not ask whether a man is acting: we ask whether he is doing anything. We do not ask whether a man is going to act (except when this, like the preceding question, is given a dynamic sense by being asked in a context where it is generally expected that he must do, or be doing, something, and sometimes something in particular): we ask whether he is going to do something. The word 'action' has the same kind of linguistic role as the word 'behaviour'. The latter has an

⁴¹ Loc.cit.p.526.

It will be one of the aims of Chapter VII to provide a more thorough-going analysis of the features which characterise human behaviour.

altogether wider connotation, of course. It is a word used to connote not one action but a series of actions or reactions spread over a period of time. But in its perfectly neutral sense - in its reflexive use it contains a built-in appraisal - we do not ask whether a man has behaved, for he is continually doing this by virtue of his actions and reactions: we speak of the sum-total of his activities as 'behaviour'. It is in this sense that its function, like the word 'action', may perhaps be regarded as meta-linguistic. It must be stressed with respect to the word 'action' that it is frequently used of what a man does; the point being made is that when it is so used it introduces a sophistication - sometimes a ~~pal~~ plain emphasis - which the context would not otherwise have. What is of some importance, however, is that the kind of contexts in which the word is employed are those in which a great deal hangs upon the decision which the agent makes, and upon the action which is the result of it. 'Has he acted?', or 'What action did he perform?' are questions which bear witness, on the one hand, to the pregnancy of the decision involved and, on the other, to the anxiety of those who will be affected by it. Further, 'act' and 'action' convey a formality, a sense of importance, which the verb 'to do' lacks. Now it could be that those who, like Nowell-Smith, hold that action is that which is preceded by the kind of decision for which a person has reasons are misled by the use suggested

above. That is to say, they have supposed that the above use is in some way paradigmatic of the way in which the word ought to be employed, that it signifies the kind of 'happening' to which the word properly refers. It would then be easy to see how the concept comes to be defined in terms of decision and choice. But, supposing this were the explanation of the mental-occurrence view of action, the conclusion is unfounded. That there are actions which seem to call for description in terms of acting rather than doing is neither here nor there so far as the concept of action is concerned. This fact does, admittedly, as I have tried to show, reflect upon the importance of the particular decision being taken, and the action which is the result of it; but there is an all-important sense in which the content of a decision and of an action fails to have a bearing upon their form. The way in which a person decides(assuming for the purpose of this point that deciding always presupposes having reasons) is the same, whether his decision is a simple or a difficult one: he considers the merit of various courses of action, the end-product being the knowledge of what he is going to do. And the way in which a person acts is in a general sense always the same: he is doing something which has an effect - obvious or non-obvious - upon the world; something which takes time and which may sometimes be timed; something which may interfere with, encroach upon, other

activities. It is merely an incidental fact that some of the things I do have some important consequences either for me or for those around me. The same action may not always have such consequences, and it may not always, therefore, be appropriate to describe what I did as acting as opposed to doing.

The theatrical use of the word 'act' is perhaps an instance of the emphasis or sophistication which attaches to the word. To watch a stage-play, or a film, is to watch what is essentially a piece of doing, as it were. The things which actors do on the stage are the things which we, as ordinary human beings, do in real life. It is true, of course, that what we do, they are pretending to do, and it is also true that the word 'act' often means merely to pretend; but there is nevertheless a sense in which theatrical acting is a means of emphasising a piece of doing, of isolating ~~it~~^{or} extracting it from the context of real life and placing it upon a pedestal for public viewing. It is thereby given what is best termed a kind of sophistication; an extra-social, extra-linguistic, setting. In a slightly different way, these are the qualities which attach to our use of the word in non-theatrical contexts where, by virtue of the ~~a~~ importance of the actual decision involved, the end-product is described as 'acting', 'action', etc., as opposed to 'doing'. I am suggesting that a possible - if unlikely - source of the definition of action in terms of decision or choice is to be found partly in a

preoccupation with this sophisticated use of the word, to the exclusion of the large variety of cases in which a person either does not decide at all or else decides in the absence of reasons.

II. MOTIVES AS DISPOSITIONS

The dispositional analysis of motives is perhaps given its most prominent expression by Ryle, in The Concept of Mind, where he says: "When we ask 'Why did someone act in a certain way?' this question might, so far as its language goes, either be an enquiry into the cause of his acting in that way, or be an enquiry into the character of the agent which accounts for his having acted in that way on that occasion. I suggest.... that explanations by motives are explanations of the second type and not of the first type."¹

It is worth mentioning as an incidental remark here that the dichotomy between an enquiry into the 'cause' of an action, and an enquiry into the character of the agent is, on the face of it, somewhat perplexing, even if the activity entailed under these respective labels is fairly clear. The fact is that by 'cause' Ryle is referring to that which we would normally class as an objective, external, event. This is instanced by his distinction between explaining the shattering of glass either by reference to its inherent brittleness or by reference to the fact of its being struck. Since the inherent brittleness of glass corresponds very closely to personal characteristics of a dispositional nature, we have to assume that by 'cause' Ryle means that which brought about the breakage at that moment, as

¹. p. 89.

opposed to any other. In the case of human actions, this can only correspond to particular features of the 'objective' situations in which we find ourselves at any given time. Thus the immediate 'cause' of the man's decision to book accommodation at a continental hotel is the sight of the holiday advertisement in the travel-agency's window; the cause of Mrs Moore's visit to the mosque, in Forster's 'A Passage to India', was the sight of the building itself; the immediate cause of my attendance at the local symphony concert was my having received a free invitation, and so on. But situational features of this kind do not, independently of their relation to the needs and requirements of the agent, constitute what we mean by explanations in terms of motives. It is true that the question 'Why did someone act in a certain way?' may be an enquiry into the cause of his acting in that way, where the term 'cause' does in fact refer to some feature objective to the agent; but it is false to suppose that it could be a reference to motivation. Ryle would seem to be suggesting that explanations in terms of motives are not of this causal nature as though it were possible they might well have been. That is to say, his language seems to imply that the question is debatable, and that at least some philosophers have held that motive-explanations are of the kind which he rejects. Yet it would in the first place be plainly ridiculous to suggest that causal factors external to the agent can adequately explain a

given action and at the same time to assert that this is what the agent's motive consists of. It is certainly true that such causal factors may, in particular cases, entirely determine the nature of the action; and it may even be that in a large number of cases - impulsive, absent-minded, perhaps habitual actions² suggest themselves here - these are the factors in which we will be primarily interested; but these would be cases where the motive is either insignificant in the explanation of what happened, or where it was simply non-existent; so that these actions could initially never have been candidates for motivated behaviour.

In the second place, if we interpret Ryle to mean by 'cause' the conjunction of some objective event with the agent's desire or need for this or that, then clearly we are no longer in the field of purely causal factors - unless facets of the agent's character are regarded as such, and Ryle himself discounts this latter possibility. The fact is, therefore, that in referring to the agent's likes and dislikes, in referring only to what he wanted at this or that particular moment, we are referring to one aspect of his character. And this is no more than a reiteration of something which is obviously peculiar to motives, namely that they always refer to personal characteristics of this nature. This being the case, it is hard to see how Ryle can be saying anything informative when he asserts that explanations by motives reveal some aspect of the

². See Chapter III

agent's character.

It is fair to point out, however, that this is not his principal contention. We have seen that the operative example in the statement of his case is the brittleness of glass, where we are meant to see this as a long-standing or permanent feature of the commodity. By analogy, we are meant to infer that motives not only refer us to a person's character, but that they refer us to a dispositional feature of that character. Thus Ryle's view is to be construed as saying "he boasted on meeting the stranger and his doing so satisfies the law-like proposition that whenever he finds the chance of securing the admiration and envy of others, he does whatever he thinks will produce this admiration and envy."³ Miss Anscombe's comment upon this particular passage was that "it seems to say, and I can't understand it unless it implies, that a man could not be said to have boasted from vanity unless he always behaved vainly, or at least very very often did so. But this does not seem to be true."⁴ And from one important point of view, it certainly is not true. Plainly, we cannot, and in practice do not, infer from the fact that a person acted jealously on a particular occasion that he is therefore of a jealous disposition. 'Confirmed' bachelors sometimes fall in love with pretty girls, but we do not, for this reason alone, suppose that they had always been what Alan R. White calls 'sex-interested'

³. Op.cit., p.89

⁴. Intention, p.21

males. And if we did make such a judgement, it would be curiously incompatible with its predecessor, especially when one considers the kind of evidence which would lead to it. But

But such counter-examples really only scratch at the surface of a problem which Ryle must have had in mind, even if he never clearly formulated it. This is the problem of deciding whether anything^{ever} really counts as being 'out of character' in the sense in which this is popularly used. It might be argued, for example, that it is possible to formulate a law-like hypothetical proposition even in cases where a person's action is apparently an exception to his previous record. This may be done simply by amplifying the details of the total situation so as to make it obvious that certain of its features were absent in previous situations similar in most other respects. This would, presumably, on Ryle's view, constitute a basis for prediction while avoiding the risk of incompatibility with some other proposition concerning the same character. There would be a difficulty, on this view, of justifying its status as a law-like proposition having the form 'Whenever... then...', for, in general, a proposition of this form owes its validity to the fact that the event or action in question has occurred more than once; and since we are defining the present case as an exception to a person's general behaviour, this fact is absent.

But it has to be realised that this general difficulty is

common to Ryle's theory in any case. The definition of a motive as a dispositional characteristic itself makes the assumption that law-like propositions are valid independently of antecedent supporting evidence; and if it did not make such an assumption, the definition would be purely and simply arbitrary. What lies behind Ryle's account is, no doubt, the persuasive supposition that once a person performs a certain action from a certain feeling or with a certain end in mind, he is then always potentially liable to perform the same action again in precisely similar circumstances; and this would be what we mean by saying that it is 'in his nature' or a 'part of his character' to do so. And in one important sense, the proposition would remain true whether it were subsequently substantiated or not; nor would its truth be challenged by what would otherwise constitute counter-instances. Potential counter-instances would be rejected on the ground that they did not resemble, in every particular respect, that which had gone before; and the absence of any ~~confirmatory~~ confirmatory evidence at all would be dismissed on the ground that to talk about tendencies and dispositions is in no way to imply (within a limited class at any rate) the actualisation of them - or alternatively, one might argue that absence of confirmation was entirely due to there being no subsequent situation comparable in every respect to that which had already occurred.

The stipulation with regard to the insignificance of

confirmatory evidence is of course an important one. Absence of such evidence can be dismissed only within a general framework which takes it into account. Thus, using Ryle's illustration, we cannot afford to neglect cases where glass has withstood the impact of a hard object unless there is initially sufficient evidence to show that nevertheless, in general, glass, as a commodity, has a tendency to shatter in such cases. The lack of this more fundamental evidence would prohibit us from making light of the subsequent exceptions. And similarly, a statement about what a man has a tendency to do or not to do falls into the much wider class of statements which characterise human beings in general. In general, if no one ever substantiated statements concerning tendencies, then we should have no right to allow the non-fulfilment of any such tendency, and indeed the definition of 'tendency' or 'disposition' would come to lose its meaning. However, granted the existence of a general framework of favourable evidence, this allows us to admit a limited number of counter-instances, and thus to salvage this aspect of Ryle's position.

One has to bear in mind in connection with the dispositional analysis that we are not obliged to give it a 'retrospective' interpretation - though it would seem as though Miss Anscombe has done so. We do not have to suppose, that is, that because X is jealous on this occasion that he must, therefore, have been jealous on all previous comparable

occasions, any more than we have to suppose that because Mr MacMillan was (if he was) guilty of negligence in connection with Mr Profumo that he had therefore been similarly guilty in other instances. (It is perhaps worth pointing out here that in this particular case - that is, in a political context - there may indeed be a preponderance of people who are, by virtue of their political bias, psychologically predisposed to place a retrospective interpretation upon this action, or lack of action; and that it would therefore have to be discounted just for this reason). If we exclude such bias, political or otherwise, then it would seem as though there is much evidence for saying that, as a rule, we do not make a reference to those actions - known or unknown - which have preceded the one in question. ^{h_a}What we may do - and this would appear to be a very common a feature of the judgements we make about one another - is to give it a predictive interpretation. If it is true that the predictive analysis characterises most judgements of this kind, then this is obviously a main source of evidence for the kind of theory which Ryle is putting forward; in which case it might be more appropriate to describe his theory as sociological rather than psychological. It is, after all, only fair to point out that Ryle's explicit intention is not so much to analyse what is is to have a motive as to explain what we are doing when we ascribe a motive to a person.

And it may well be that in ascribing motives we make the implicit assumption that the agent in question is thenceforward liable to act from the same motive again on similar occasions. The tendency to make such an assumption is represented paradigmatically in the attitude of suspicion with which we regard ex-convicts; so that, so far as a predictive analysis goes, as opposed to a retrospective one, the ascription of a motive becomes to some extent irrevocable, and it is in this sense that the motive is properly termed a dispositional characteristic, being part of the 'character' of the agent.

It is of course questionable whether Ryle intended that his theory should be given only a predictive interpretation, or whether it was to be extended to the bolder thesis for which Anscombe and others have attacked him; but certainly there appears to be nothing in the language of this section which specifically commits him to the stronger view. It is true that Ryle describes 'He boasted from vanity' as satisfying a law-like proposition, but we have already observed that the fulfilment of such a proposition need not entail any antecedent occurrences of the action in question, any more than the shattering of a piece of glass entails such previous instances in order for it to be true that glass, when struck by a hard object, will shatter. It is not the case, upon the present interpretation, that because X has (now) boasted from vanity, therefore he must always have been vain - even though this is

in this case very likely; rather, because X has (now) boasted from vanity, therefore he will be vain on similar future occasions.

But now let us examine this weaker version more carefully. It is probably true to say that if X is known to have acted from jealousy on any particular occasion, this will be ground for expecting him to act in a similar way on subsequent occasions - because this is how we tend to think about each other's actions. But it is also true that information concerning the reaction of the agent himself to his own action, or the consequences of it, may cause us to alter our opinion about what he may be expected to do; and this may happen after what is only the first occurrence of his acting in this way. Now if we suppose that what we mean by 'character' is the sum-total of the descriptions of, or statements about, X which other people would make, then there is some ground for thinking that his acting from jealousy on this particular occasion would not form part of this description. Such grounds would of course be, in particular, that we do not expect X to exhibit jealousy again, and we do not therefore feel justified in listing it as a facet of his character. Clearly, this reluctance to attribute jealousy to X as a dispositional characteristic will not be based merely upon a consideration of the uniqueness of the circumstances in which X found himself, for, from the point of view of what people think about the action, how they react to it, what emerges as being of primary

importance is the revelation that X was (after all) capable of jealousy, and this tends to overshadow the isolated, improbable, nature of the circumstances. The uniqueness of the situation may well be a necessary but certainly not a sufficient condition for the social repudiation of the relevant sentiment as being dispositional. After all, our tendency is to think not that the situation is unlikely to occur again, but that having exhibited a capacity for jealousy once, X may do so on other occasions.

Then can we suppose that this condition is capable of becoming both necessary and sufficient by making the reference already mentioned to the reaction of the agent himself to his own action or to its consequences? The answer to this would seem to depend very largely upon the nature of such a reaction. It will not be enough to say that the agent has (now) resolved not to fall prey to this sentiment again for resolutions of this sort are, notoriously, not easy to make.⁵ We would require some knowledge of the context in which it was made. If it were the case that the action which the agent performed was rationally decided upon - and we do sometimes make cool, calm, decisions of this sort even in our jealousy - then this would, I suggest, cast doubt on his power to carry out a resolution against its further execution from the same motive. This perhaps comes out more clearly when contrasted with another kind of action having

⁵ See Chapter V

the same kind of results. Thus there are some situations in which it is appropriate to say that the agent's action took him by surprise, that the responsibility for the action does not really rest with him, or that he was unable to foresee how he would react to a certain situation. It is, in other words, the kind of action which falls into the orbit of qualities which require a suspension of judgement as well on the part of the agent himself as on the part of the those who observe his conduct. The soldier who suddenly retreats upon his first confrontation with enemy fire, or who disobeys an order from fear of the risk to his own life, might be held to illustrate such actions. Here, it is not the case that he weighs up the risks involved, not indeed has he had time to reflect upon the dangers of the situation. Admittedly, there may have been much time for reflection prior to meeting the circumstances for the first time, but then the action is what it is precisely because such reflection is largely ineffective in its bearing upon future action in these cases. It is rather like the actor who is given his first important part in a major play. He is no doubt aware of the prominence of the theatre itself, the good reputation which it has, its seats always packed to capacity, and so on; but no amount of reflection upon these facts can enable him to predict or foresee the stage-fright with which he is ~~de~~ suddenly seized on first facing his audience. Essentially, these are cases where only the very experience of the situation itself can cause

action or lack of action. What happens to the actor on the stage is very like what happens to the soldier on the battlefield, in that both are overcome by an uncontrollable emotion resulting in failing to^{do} anything at all in the one case, and an impulsive, almost reflex, movement into action in the other. Now what the soldier does is normally described as being cowardly, but perhaps this is not the important thing. What it illustrates is that it is sometimes possible to put a legitimate stress on the involuntary nature of what was done. Granted that most of our desires and impulses have their origin in a civilised context, we might describe the action of which the soldier was guilty as being a reversion or regression to something which is not specifically human. But if it is so described, then there is at least a temptation (perhaps unjustified) to place it outside the category of 'character' proper. The kind of character which a man has turns upon what he does, or has a tendency to do; but then what he does is, it may be argued, what he is responsible for doing, or for making a habit of doing. Jumping from the path of an oncoming vehicle does not, for this reason, form a constituent of the character-framework. Patently, it cannot - apart from exceptional cases - for, on account of its widespread practice, its reflex nature, it simply fails to characterise. (One cannot identify an orange, within a group of oranges, by its colour). What is being suggested, therefore, is that if we stress the uncontrollable nature of the action, it can sometimes be regarded as a reversion to a pre- or a-

social state, and thus as being excluded from the traditional or popular conception of character. And it will, of course, now be evident why it has to be distinguished from the earlier type of action we considered, namely, that for which a decision was responsible. To decide to do something may be regarded pre-eminently as 'building upon the substance of character'. It is, as it were, to make oneself answerable for the action which is the result of it, and to make oneself answerable whether or not one regrets what has happened. The act of deciding is thus also the admission of onus or responsibility, the admission by one's whole self that 'this action is to be attributed to me and not (directly anyway) to my environment, or my upbringing, or my more animal impulses'; so that one might say that actions which are the result of decisions are those which are written with an indelible pencil upon the character-chart, whereas those for which responsibility is legitimately denied do not - again with exceptions - appear at all.

But again it is difficult to see just how far this line can be pursued. We have already seen ^{that} the nature of the last-mentioned action may not in itself be sufficient to inhibit our natural tendency to perpetuate the motive as a long-standing quality of character. In the absence of some guarantee that what the soldier did was a genuine 'reversion', we may well suspect that his cowardice does not end there. Perhaps we have to go even further, and admit that even in cases where we are entirely

satisfied that the man was not responsible for what he did, the above suspicion may linger - if only because there was no accompanying resolution, on the part of the soldier, to be on his guard against such situations. And one begins to think that the whole case for a dispositional interpretation of motives suffers what Flew, in another context, once termed a 'death by a thousand qualifications'. That is to say, when each counter-example is rebutted with a further qualification, it begins to look as if one could go on making qualifications ad infinitum; and if this were so, then of course that which is being qualified is no longer of any practical value. Even when faced with a limited number of qualifications, it is hard to resist the thought that the notion has become so esoteric as to be beyond philosophical significance. Yet, when all is said and done, we are still faced with the evident fact that not all motives are used as a basis for prediction, that we do not always label a man with a certain feeling, a certain tendency, or propensity, merely because he has been observed to exhibit it on some one occasion. And we have to note, at this point, a further feature of our judgements upon one another. It is not just that an isolated display of a certain sentiment frequently fails to suffice as a basis for prediction; we also sometimes allow a series of 'isolated' incidents of this kind, treating them all as being 'out of character'. The statement 'He sometimes acts out of character' is of some

significance in this matter; for, above all, it indicates that only an underlying class of actions ultimately counts as contributing to the make-up of character, and that other actions, no matter how frequently they occur - again within a certain limit - somehow fail to be of importance in this respect, somehow fail to be part of what has come to be accepted as an established pattern. The statement 'Such actions are not characteristic of him' indicates just this. It begins to look, therefore, as though we shall have to force a dichotomy between the practice of ascribing or not ascribing qualities to a man's character, and, on the other hand, making predictions on the basis of what we know about him. This is not of the nature of a remarkable discovery about our judgements upon other people: it is merely to record what in fact we do in this particular field. We deny that an action, or series of actions, is characteristic of X (in the positive sense of denying that certain qualities would find a place in the description of his character) while still being prepared to predict on the basis of these (exceptional) qualities. This would be a compromise between the predictive interpretation put upon Ryle's thesis, and the view that motives are always long-standing qualities of character. It will be to concede to Ryle that isolated displays of certain sentiments may cause us to expect the subject of such displays to act in similar ways upon subsequent occasions. This concession itself will have to be

qualified to some extent, for we know that if the incidence of the sentiment is sufficiently isolated, we may have no tendency to predict its recurrence. If we discount such cases, then there will be some justification for regarding this as a dispositional account of motives so far as the predictive aspect of this thesis is concerned. It is a dispositional account if only because we have to cash the adjective in terms of law-like hypothetical propositions to which Ryle refers - a remark which, under the circumstances, may sound a little trite. Yet it is important in bringing out the nature of what is not being conceded to him, namely, that a dispositional account in this sense remains independent of what is properly described as 'character'. The kind of cases which might be cited here are those in which X has acted out of character sufficiently often to cause us to expect him to do so on future occasions, but where the occurrence is not frequent enough to warrant our saying that this is a feature of his character. Perhaps this is not important for Ryle's thesis, but this much must at least be said: if Ryle believes that in providing a dispositional account of motives he is merely giving an account which conceives of motives as potential evidence for prediction, then this is at least partially, if not wholly, true. But if he believes that such an account also provides an analysis of what we mean by 'character traits', or simply what is normally subsumed under the title 'character',

then this is clearly false for the reasons which I have tried to set forward. In particular, to be satisfied in respect of a prediction one makes on the basis of certain (exceptional) displays of sentiment is not necessarily to be satisfied that such qualities constitute part of the description of ~~his~~ a man's character.

Acknowledgement of this dichotomy allows us to explain our reluctance to ascribe certain features to a person's character by reference to the considerations which we saw earlier to be inadequate. That is to say, we may now meaningfully point to the uniqueness of the circumstances in which X found himself in order to explain how he came to act as he did. Within limit, a series of unusual actions of this kind may occur, and we would merely extend the explanation by pointing out that the agent's capacity to avoid reacting unfavourably is a matter to which he has to habituate himself. The acknowledgement of these actions, notwithstanding the judgement that they are exceptional, leads us to make corresponding predictions - predictions, that is, which take them into account. What it does not lead us to do is to suppose that these actions are 'characteristic' of the agent, to suppose that they are indelibly marked up as a feature of his character.

The introduction of this dichotomy may, from one point of view, seem innocuous. I do not, however, think that this need be of any great importance. I have been primarily concerned

to establish that the predictive - as opposed to the retrospective-interpretation of Ryle's 'dispositions' is to some extent inevitable. The difficulty which the present dichotomy was intended to solve was that of accounting for our occasional if not frequent reluctance to attribute certain features to a man's character, even though we may be prepared to predict on the basis of these same features. I was merely suggesting that it may be fallacious to equate the ability to predict with the ability to characterise, that, in some sense, the equation represents a form of category mistake. Now the solution to this particular problem might well lie in the field of psychology. The reluctance which we have talked about may be analysed in terms of certain inhibitions brought about primarily through likes and dislikes within the field of personal relationships. Thus if X is fond of Y, he will be not be predisposed to accept as part of Y's character certain undesirable features. (Equally, of course, one might argue that he will not be prepared to predict on this basis either, but let that pass). And if this analysis is true, the result will be to render the above dichotomy somewhat artificial, and, as we have seen, innocuous.

But I am not essentially concerned to answer this objection. The remarks already made go some way to counter it: I pointed out that at least some of these inhibitions may be due to something in the nature of a rational theory concerning the



'criteria' for the concept of character; ^{that} but the notion of character is in one important sense embedded in the context of society, and in a context of sophisticated behaviour in particular; that this is why the concept of rational decision looms so large in any attempt to stipulate what features^R_A belong to a person, and what features do not - for the kind of things which a person decides to do are those things ~~wh~~ for which he explicitly accepts responsibility; and that it was in the light of this theory that one might be led to see the exceptional actions as reversions to something essentially non-social. No doubt, the psychological explanation will be at least partially true. If it is only partially true, then the central problem would still await a solution, for the interesting cases will now be precisely those which the psychological analysis fails to explain, and the remarks which I have made would furnish at least a potential solution. If, on the other hand, the claim is made for the psychological approach that it is all-embracing, then the onus falls upon the would-be exponents of this theory to account in some other way for those cases where there are no obvious personal affections or antagonisms, or where such feeling as there is is insufficiently strong to warrant sensible talk of 'inhibitions'. To enquire into this in more detail is to depart from a purely philosophical issue. And it would in any case be unjustified, since I have only been concerned to 'put feelers' out, as it were, towards a plausible solution of the problem.

Peter Winch has three important criticisms of Ryle's account~~s~~ of motives which I should now like to consider.^{6.} The first of these is that it seems to render motive-explanations in some sense vacuous. Winch refers his reader, for expansion of this view, to a passage by Peter Geach in Mental Acts, where the latter says that when Ryle "explains a statement of an actual difference between two men's mental states as really asserting only that there are circumstances in which one would act differently from the other, and apparently holds that this could be all the difference there is between the two, he is running counter to a very deep-rooted way of thinking. When two agents differ in their behaviour, we look for some actual, not merely hypothetical, difference between them to account for this.... Ryle explicitly and repeatedly compares psychological accounts of behaviour to saying that a glass broke because it was brittle (had the dispositional property of brittleness); in so doing, however, he is setting them on a level with the statement that opium puts people to sleep because it has a dormitive power - which I believe was not his intention."^{7.}

There are, I think, two things which must be said about this criticism. In the first place, that Ryle's account should run counter to a very deep-rooted way of thinking is neither here nor there. Philosophical analysis often does; and this is

^{6.} 'The Idea of a Social Science', p.80

^{7.} Op.cit., p.5

therefore not a worthwhile objection to the account. But secondly - and this is more important - whether or not it is legitimate to translate actual differences into hypothetical differences within the field of human behaviour is a question which would appear to have no direct bearing upon whether differences in terms of hypothetical events reduce to vacuity, on a par with the statement that opium puts people to sleep because it has a dormitive power. Clearly Winch thinks that it does have some bearing. But if it is characteristic of the latter statement that it has no explanatory value, then this is not a feature which is shared by a dispositional account of motives. Or we may put it in this way: if it is indeed true that a dispositional analysis of motives reduces to this kind of vacuity, then it looks as if we must say that accounts in terms of actual differences would be similarly reducible. Thus we may assume that actual differences will consist of mental acts, or events, or occurrences - in general, the things with which Ryle wishes to dispense; and it is patently obvious that reference to such occurrences do in fact function as legitimate explanations of conduct. Yet if we do not question the legitimacy and the informative value of these explanations, then by what principle do we begin to question the dispositional analysis? It is not even as though the kind of statement one makes in these contexts differs from those made in the light of a dispositional account. For, whether we

conceive of jealousy, for example, as a mental event, or whether we interpret it as a tendency to act in certain ways on certain occasions, we nevertheless explain a man's conduct simply by asserting that he was jealous.

Admittedly, given some philosophical perversity, one can trace the presence of vacuity somewhere. If one simply said, for example, that to explain an action by reference to a motive is to say that a man did Y because he has a tendency to do Y, or because this is the sort of thing that he does, this would seem to be largely uninformative. But Ryle is not saying this. The first step in his account of motives is not different from ordinary thinking upon this matter. He would agree that to assert that X is jealous is a means of explaining (and a means of explaining by reference to a motive) an action appropriately related to this. Such a statement is informative and explanatory to one who is in ignorance either of X's character or of the significant antecedent factors involved. Ryle's concern is surely with the analysis of precisely what it is that we are saying when we assert of someone that he is jealous, or indignant, or angry, or proud, etc., and this is a problem which is, so to speak, subsequent to the act of imparting information.

One might, then, look for vacuity elsewhere. Perhaps it lies, for Geach, in this very analysis of what it is to have a motive. Thus one might be led to say that the account of e.g.

jealousy in respect of one's wife in terms of a disposition to stay at her side at all public functions, to intercept other men's conversation with her, to query her independent activities, etc., is only to draw out what is already contained within the meaning of jealousy (given the context). But again, this would be a strange candidate for vacuity. Jealousy, like most motive-words of its kind, and unlike opium, is not something which is characterised by one predominant feature. There is no standard to which a man's jealousy has to conform: the form which it takes will differ from one man to another. This being the case, it is hard to see how one could ever hope to determine, a priori, the kind of actions which will characterise a man's jealousy. Yet if Ryle's analysis really were analogous to the statement about opium, this is precisely the type of move one would expect to make.

In fact, we happen to know that it is wrong to interpret Ryle's dispositional account merely as an analysis of, or piece of synonymy for, words like jealousy; for it entails a lot more than this. Above all, his account would allow us the right to expect a man to exhibit the same behaviour on future appropriate occasions. This is the point of saying that an investigation of motives is an enquiry into a man's character. Yet if this is what makes his thesis different from the standard conception of motives, in what sense does his analysis become vacuous? Admittedly, there is again a superficial resemblance

to the opium case here, considered from one point of view: to say of opium that it has a dormitive power is to say that it will always, or nearly always, make people sleep; and similarly to say that someone is jealous is to say, on Ryle's thesis, that he will always, on appropriate occasions, be jealous. But we have already seen that there is no one thing which we mean by jealousy in the way in which there is one thing in particular which characterises opium, namely, its dormitive power. It may well be that there is a definite class of actions which are symptomatic of jealousy, but it still remains open to question which member(or members) of this class characterises X as opposed to Y, and this alone should lead us to fight shy of vacuity. Indeed, one might well argue that the notion of vacuity is more appropriate to a mental-occurrence view, for an exponent of this view may wish to maintain that jealousy is the name for a specific mental feeling or sensation; and if this were the case, the feeling or sensation would begin to look very like the dormitive power of opium, as far as its explanatory force is concerned.

Let us look at it from another angle. Geach could put the objection thus: Just as there is something uninformative about saying that opium puts people to sleep because it has a dormitive power, so there is something similarly odd about saying that X is jealous because he tends to do A, B, and C, where A, B, and C are expressions of his jealousy - just as

putting people to sleep is an expression of the dormitive power of opium. But, quite apart from the difficulties we have just met in connection with jealousy, it is again misleading to place this interpretation upon Ryle. Of course it is true that the observation of X's behaviour is the only means which an observer has of telling whether or not X is jealous, and there is no doubt that Ryle means it to be true in just this sense.

Consequently, it is possible to put the position ⁴elliptically by saying that X is jealous because of A, B, and C. But while there is at least a quasi-causal relation between the agent's judgement and the reasons which he has for making it, there is not, and cannot, on Ryle's view, be a causal relation between the agent's jealousy and the expression of it; for the latter is nothing more nor less than the former. Thus, in the ultimate analysis, Ryle is not saying that X is jealous because he tends to do A, B, and C. And only if he were saying this - and provided we could overcome the difficulties we have already met in connection with jealousy - could we meaningfully talk of vacuity.

Winch's second criticism is one with which we have already dealt at length in the earlier sections of this chapter. "Ryle's account", he says, "runs into difficulties where we assign a motive to an act which is quite at variance with the agent's previously experienced behaviour. There is no contradiction in

saying that someone who never before manifested any signs of a jealous disposition has, on a given occasion, acted from jealousy; indeed, it is precisely when someone acts unexpectedly that the need for a motive explanation is particularly apparent."⁸ Suffice it to say here that it is hard to see why, *prima facie*, this should present a difficulty for Ryle. He is not, we argued, committed to giving a retrospective emphasis to the dispositional account. That is to say, if a person acts from jealousy for the first time, it may be right to say that this is now a facet of his character - except in the (special) cases to which we referred. There is, after all, nothing very peculiar about saying that a person has acquired a certain tendency or inclination. And this is presumably one way in which Ryle can account for actions which are termed 'out of character'.

I would agree with Geach that there are places in The Concept of Mind, and particularly in the sections on Motives, where Ryle seems to suggest a retrospective analysis (in addition to one which we have termed 'predictive' or 'forward-looking'). And indeed, perhaps he does wish to suggest this. I want only to point out that a dispositional account does not necessarily imply it, and that one can make sense of Ryle's thesis without drawing this implication.

The wording of the quotation which we considered at the beginning of this chapter might, I suppose, be taken as being

⁸ Winch, *op.cit.*, p.86.

favourable to the view which Geach puts forward. There, he points out that when we ask why a man acted in the way he did, this may, among other things, be "an enquiry into the character of the agent which accounts for his having acted in that way on that occasion". And the very notion of an enquiry into character in this way suggests an enquiry into some sort of pre-established pattern of behaviour, something already existent. But surely, in defense of the general^a thesis (independently of whether Ryle holds it or not) one has only to point out that the acquisition of tendencies, inclinations, dispositions, and the like, is as much a part of a person's character as any other feature we may care to mention. We surely learn as much about a person when we learn that he recently acquired a certain quality - dispositional or otherwise - as we do when we learn that he expressed a pre-existent tendency. Of course, this raises once more the whole issue of what legitimately ~~counts~~ belongs to the notion of character, and what does not, and what kind of criteria we employ in order to make the distinction. But this question cannot be of crucial relevance here. It is merely being claimed that if we grant the validity of a dispositional analysis of motives, this analysis is not necessarily committed to a retrospective view of character and that, in view of the above remarks, the present passage from Ryle need not be given this interpretation.

Winch's final criticism of Ryle is that he misconstrues the nature of motive-explanations. After having given some attention to Mill's causal account of motives, he goes on to say: "But for my present purposes it is more important to notice that though Ryle's account is different from Mill's in many respects, it is not nearly different enough. A dispositional, just as much as a causal, statement, is based upon generalizations from what has been observed to happen. But a statement about an agent's motives is not like that: it is better understood as analogous to a setting out of the agent's reasons for acting thus. Suppose that N, a university lecturer, says that he is going to cancel his next week's lectures because he intends to travel to London: here we have a statement of intention for which a reason is given. Now N does not infer his intention of cancelling his lectures from his desire to go to London, as the imminent shattering of the glass might be inferred, either from the fact that someone had thrown a stone or from the brittleness of the glass. N does not offer his reason as evidence for the soundness of his prediction about his future behaviour..... Rather, he is justifying his intention. His statement is not of the form: 'Such and such causal factors are present, therefore this will result'; nor yet of the form: 'I have such and such a disposition, which will result in my doing this'; it is of the form: 'In view of such and such considerations this will be a

reasonable thing to do."^{9.}

Now it must be said here that this view of motives is a significant one which, with certain modifications, I wish to endorse. It is a view one aspect of which is considered in the later section of the following chapter. It is, however, important to see the ^{relation} ~~relation~~ between this view and Ryle's in its proper perspective. Winch, it would seem, has misrepresented this relation. Let us look at a fairly representative quotation from Ryle once again, one to which Winch in fact refers. Ryle says: "To explain an act as done from a certain motive is not analogous to saying that the glass broke, because the stone hit it, but to the quite different type of statement that the glass broke, when the stone hit it, because the glass was brittle."^{10.} As we have already had occasion to notice, what Ryle is doing - and this is surely clear from his very words in this passage - is providing us with an account of what it is that we are saying, what it is that we are doing, when we impute a motive to a person, namely, referring to a facet of that person's character. On the other hand, what Winch is clearly trying to do is to show us how a motive - whether it refers to a long-standing trait of character or not - is able to make an action intelligible, how it is able to function as an explanation of the action at all. And if this is correct, then it is difficult to see how Winch

^{9.} Winch, op.cit., p.81

^{10.} Ryle, op.cit., p.87

can be justified in criticising Ryle's position on the basis of his own. Indeed, Winch inadvertently makes it clear that his own view cannot be regarded as incompatible with Ryle's when he says on the following page: "To say, for example, that N murdered his wife from jealousy is certainly not to say that he acted reasonably. But it is to say that his act was intelligible in terms of the modes of behaviour which are familiar in our society, and that it was governed by considerations appropriate to its context. These two aspects of the matter are interwoven: one can act 'from considerations' only where there are accepted standards of what is appropriate to appeal to. The behaviour of Chaucer's Troilus towards Cressida is intelligible only in the context of the conventions of courtly love. Understanding Troilus presupposes understanding those conventions for it is only from them that his acts derive their meaning."¹¹ And while I would agree with this, it is not at all clear why it should prevent a person from holding a view about what is immediately entailed by the ascription of a motive, as Ryle claims to be doing. It is one thing to ascribe jealousy to a person as his motive: it is quite another to show how motives ultimately derive their explanatory value. It is indeed the difference between the descriptions 'immediate' and 'ultimate' which makes this dichotomy meaningful. Winch himself clearly implies that there is one thing, namely, understanding Troilus - corresponding

¹¹. Winch, op.cit., p.82

to that aspect of the matter in which Ryle is interested - which is dependent upon another, namely, the social conditions which render it intelligible. Concentration upon the first has a certain amount of intrinsic philosophical interest, and is of particular significance in the philosophy of mind. For this reason alone, there is some justification for treating it in isolation.

But quite apart from these remarks, has not Winch misconstrued Ryle's thesis from another point of view? In the first place, Winch speaks as though, on a dispositional account, one must talk about 'inferring' motives. Indeed his own example is intended to rebut this suggestion by pointing to the fact that the lecturer does not infer his intention of cancelling his lectures from his desire to go to London - and the example is proffered as the paradigm of motive explanations in general. But it is not unreservedly true, even on Ryle's thesis, to say that an agent infers his own motives. Of course, he may do so in cases where he cannot understand why he did what he did, and where psycho-analysis may be required, but we would then be in the realm of unconscious motivation, and neither Ryle nor Winch is concerned with this field.

The general points which Ryle wishes to make about motive explanations is that they deny that the action was merely automatic, that they imply that the agent "was in some way thinking or heeding what he was doing, and would not have acted

in that way, if he had not been thinking about what he was doing."¹² He says: "The sense in which a person is thinking what he is doing, when his action is to be classed not as automatic but as done from a motive, is that he is acting more or less carefully, critically, consistently, and purposefully...."¹³, and Ryle clearly means this to imply that the agent will, under these conditions, be able to answer, unhesitatingly, questions about what he is doing or has done. Among the answers given in this way will be the answer to the question 'Why are you doing this?' or 'Why did you do that?'. Ryle indeed explicitly denies, in these cases, that one infers one's motives. He had already said at an earlier point in the chapter: "We shall see.... that a person who does or undergoes something, heeding what he is doing or undergoing, can, commonly, answer questions about the incident without inference or research."¹⁴ And an example which Ryle gives almost immediately after this passage, though not intended to illustrate the same point, nevertheless makes clear what possibilities he is prepared to admit of. In this further passage he says: "A person replying to an interrogation might say that he was delving into a ditch in order to find the larvae of a certain species of insect; that he was looking for these larvae in order to find out on what fauna or flora they were parasitic;

¹². Ryle, op.cit., p.IIO-III ¹³. p.III

¹⁴. p.9I, my underlining.

that he was trying to find out on what they were parasitic in order to test a certain ecological hypothesis; and that he wanted to test this hypothesis in order to test a certain hypothesis about **Natural Selection**. At each stage he declares his motive or reason for pursuing certain investigations.... " ^{15.}

Now in a sense these explanations are no ^{more} dependent for their validity upon a generalisation from past actions than is the explanation of the cancellation of the lectures by reference to the journey to London. In neither case is it true to say that the agent infers his motive or reason. These are, as it were, ready-made explanations which derive from the circumstances themselves, the context in which the actions occur. All Ryle wants to assert in connection with such statements is that (almost whether we like it or not) in providing the motive or reason, we are speaking of a facet of the agent's character. The scientist's inspection of the larvae and the lecturer's trip to London are both to be regarded as expressions of the kind of thing which these men, respectively, are inclined, or want, to do; and a description of what a person likes doing - or alternatively the kind of things which he does - is part of the account of 'character' as we know it. It does not follow from this account that an agent, in order to provide a motive for his action has to inspect the kind of things which he has a tendency to do.

But having said this in defence of Ryle, it is fair to note

^{15.} Op.cit., p.91

a distinction not generally acknowledged in descriptions of his account, and which does tend to support the criticism laid forth by Winch. This is the distinction, not explicitly stated by Ryle himself, between particular motives and long-term motives. And it seems that Ryle wants to say that the discovery of one's own long-term motives is a matter of inference. Talking first about the motives of others he says: "The process of discovering them is not immune from error, but nor are the errors incorrigible. It is or is like an inductive process, which results in the establishment of law-like propositions and the application of them as the 'reasons' for particular actions....",^{16.} He then goes on to say: "The way in which a person discovers his own long-term motives is the same as the way in which he discovers those of others....",^{17.} suggesting that this, too, is an inductive process. What is objectionable here is not so much the claim that I may discover certain things about myself as the claim in particular that I may discover my motives, when it is made clear that these are not unconscious motives. What, ~~may~~ one may ask, is it that I discover of which I was not previously aware? Certainly I may discover that, over a period of time, my actions have formed some sort of pattern with certain common characteristics. This may be another way of saying that I have ~~at~~ tendency to ^{do} this rather than that, and so it may be said that I discover certain tendencies in my behaviour; and indeed other people may inform me

^{16.} p.90

^{17.} p.90

of this. But I am sure that we would not normally wish to say that we were thereby discovering our motives, so long as we mean by motives reasons which had consciously led us to action, reasons which had been influential in determining what we should do. Reasons of this kind are, notoriously, not the sort of things which I have to discover. We might concede to Ryle that there are some things which we discover about ourselves which are very like motives in some ways. They do, that is to say, have some explanatory value. Thus Ryle's own example (p.113) of the man who passes the salt out of politeness is a case in point. It is perfectly conceivable in this context that if the man were asked whether he would describe himself as a polite person he would go through the process of perusing his past actions in order to decide (assuming that he had never considered the matter before). But if we can correctly assume that this is what Ryle means by a long-term motive, then the question arises whether we are justified in calling this a motive at all. Admittedly, it goes some way towards explaining why the man passed the salt, but we cannot assert that it was his reason for doing so. To supply this as an explanation of his passing the salt is in some ways - but only in some ways - like giving a 'causal' account of how he came to act as he did; though in fact Ryle wishes to make this the ~~la~~ alternative to a causal account. A causal account for him would be some such statement as 'He heard his neighbour ask for it'.

The whole point is that these assertions concerning what he calls long-term motives seem to be at variance with his earlier remarks concerning the ability of the agent to answer, unhesitatingly, questions about his action; his statement that in acting from a ~~motive~~ motive, as opposed to acting from force of habit, one is acting "more or less carefully, critically, consistently, and purposefully". Unless one says that politeness is a sub-conscious prompting to action, then, on this account, one is faced with saying both that X passed the salt purposefully (to use one of the adverbs) and also that X was unaware of the reason why he did this - for Ryle will apparently not admit that X's having heard someone ask for the salt can be his reason for passing it. Yet this involves, if not a contradiction, at least some inconsistency and muddled thinking on motives.

The sense of confusion is further strengthened when one reverts to his example of the scientist inspecting the larvae, for there, in saying that the scientist "declares his motive or reason for pursuing certain investigations", he clearly admits the possibility of uninferred motives. It may be that he would want to call these short-term motives, but if this is the case, it is hard to see why he should deny the same term to the explanation of passing the salt by reference to the request for it.

There is, then, some ground for Winch's criticism in this

connection. We must only point out that it is not a criticism which stands unreservedly: that Ryle, despite some confusion in his account, does acknowledge the existence of motives which resemble, in some measure, Winch's own paradigm. Furthermore, as we have already been at pains to emphasise, the question of how one discovers one's motives, and even the question of whether it makes sense to talk about 'discovery' of motives at all, remains independent of any account of how motives derive their explanatory value. If X passes the salt out of politeness, then this functions as an explanation simply because the concept of politeness is something which is intelligible within the context of the particular society in which we live. We know that the action of passing the salt when requested to do so is one of the things¹⁷ which expresses the meaning of what it is to be polite. We could not begin to understand why Antony Powell's character Barbara¹⁸ empties a canister of sugar over Mr Widmerpool if she announces that she did so out of politeness, for, patently, this is hardly the kind of action which normally issues from that quality. The explanatory value of a motive, then, derives from the social context in which it is a motive, but this has no bearing upon what we may or may not say about a person's character in imputing a motive to him. And it is with aspects of this latter thesis that Ryle is primarily concerned - and rightly concerned too, for we have already had cause to notice that the

¹⁸. In 'A Buyer's Market'

ascription of motives is intimately - perhaps inextricably - tied up with the popular notion of 'character'. I have felt obliged to defend, and to some extent to endorse, the dispositional account of motives because I believe that it has much to contribute to any discussion concerning the explanation of human behaviour. It may be that the Rylean account goes too far in insisting that all motives have a tendency or ~~inclinat~~ inclination which is always expressible in terms of hypothetical, law-like propositions. We shall be noticing incidentally in Chapter VII, for example, that there are times when it is more appropriate to account for an action in terms of specific emotional factors antecedent to the event than to give an explanation which names a long-term character-trait - even if the former in some way commits us to the latter. But Ryle's account does have the merit of drawing our attention to an important truth for the most part ignored by previous, and still strongly contested by subsequent, writers on the subject. I have tried to emphasise this truth by pointing to what is best called the social implications of motive-ascription - by pointing in particular to our tendency (for which in part I have tried to account) to attach a general label to a person on the basis of a particular motive. This in turn is an aspect of one of the central aims of this thesis, which is to bring out the enormous complexity of the concept of motivation. It is true in a sense that Ryle cannot be given the credit for revealing

this complexity, for his account is, notoriously, as dogmatic as any we shall see, but he has at least isolated a feature of motive-ascription, some of the general implications of which I have tried to work out in the present chapter.

III.

MOTIVES AND HABITS

We noticed in the previous chapter that Ryle distinguishes between motives and habits by saying that in acting from the former I am aware of what I am doing, while this is not so when I act from the latter. I want, in this chapter, to turn our attention more closely to the ~~relation~~^{relation} between these two concepts.

We might begin by hinging the discussion upon some remarks which N.S.Sutherland makes in an article entitled 'Motives as Explanations'.¹ He maintains that an action, or series of actions, explained by reference to force of habit precludes the possibility of an explanation in terms of a motive. It will be correct to say of a person who has developed the habit of locking his back door every night that he does so from, or out of, force of habit. It will be incorrect, Sutherland suggests, to state that he does so, for example, from a desire to keep out burglars, even though this may have been his original motive for performing the action. The statement 'He has a motive for locking the back door' is true, in this context, only in the weak sense that the first action in the series was motivated and this is, according to him, insignificant.

Sutherland's contention is not, I think, entirely borne out in ordinary language. If an explanation is demanded either

¹. Mind, 1959

for one of the door-locking instances, or for the series as a whole, it is certainly not an adequate answer to reply 'He locks the door every night because it is a habit of his'. Professor W.H.F.Barnes pointed out in this connection that the adequacy of the answer really depends upon the level of questioning. I would agree that this is in general true.² But there are two things which count against its adequacy in this context. In the first place, that nightly door-locking is a habit is something which the questioner can often observe for himself. Thus the man who, upon hearing his clock chime ten, rises in a deliberative manner to lock his door might be a case in point. But secondly, there is the question, to which I shall be returning,³ of what it is that I am being informed of when I am told that X's action is habitual. For the most part, I shall want to argue that to say an action is habitual or is done out of habit, is merely to comment upon the regularity with which it was performed. But if this is the case, then clearly it is not an answer to a 'why' question to say 'He always does it'. To say that a person always does something is not in itself to say why he does it. Now one may be tempted to argue that there are situations in which such an answer will have some informative value. Thus we can imagine a situation in which a person has done something which, in the light of existing circumstances, it was clearly nonsensical to do; and

² See Introduction, p. 2.

³ See pp. 83-85.

it may be asserted that here it would be helpful if we could say 'But he acted out of habit'. But the issue is really very much more complex than this. The assumption to be made here in order to explain why X did what he did is that in some sense he was not aware, of sufficiently aware, of what he was doing. In particular, this would explain why he failed to recognise a change in the circumstances. Yet one has only to look at other cases to see that the mere use of 'habit', 'habitual', etc. does not necessarily imply this. Indeed, the counter-examples in this context are so numerous as to make it tempting to reject the notion that the use of the term 'habit' explains in this way. Immanuel Kant was notoriously a man of habit, but the kind of incidents which his biographers appeal to in support of this contention demonstrate not so much that he was unaware or only semi-aware of what he was doing but that, on the contrary, he was very acutely conscious of his own activities. Thus Bertrand Russell, in The History of Western Philosophy, (p.731) says:

"Kant was a man of such regular habits that people used to set their watches by him as he passed their doors on his constitutional, but on one occasion his time-table was disrupted for several days; this was when he was reading 'Emile'..."

Observing a time-table requires attentiveness, and indeed the implication here is that one has to be more attentive to one's activities in order to be a creature of habit than would otherwise be required. But, independently of this consideration,

it looks very much as though 'habit' here describes nothing more than an accustomed regularity - and this hardly constitutes an answer to a 'why' question. It is unnecessary to labour the point: I am not especially concerned to show that there are no cases in which reference to habit in this way is explanatory; but there is strong evidence for this view, and hence my inclination to talk of the inadequacy of such an appeal in cases where a person wishes the explanation of an action.

There is the further point that reference to habit in these cases more often than not gives rise to the additional question 'But why does he do this (which you say he does from habit)?' This obviously calls for the agent's reason, for the purpose underlying the door-locking ritual; and the question is normally intended to obtain a more informative answer than a reference to habit will supply, for example that the agent wishes to keep out burglars. And it is in fact important to note that the statement 'Because he is afraid of burglars' or 'In order to keep out burglars' is the type of answer we would normally regard as appropriate for any and every stage of the series. We frequently produce such explanations in face of knowledge that the agent is in fact not thoroughly aware of what he is doing.

A solution to the problem of what it is to be motivated now seems to be demanded. This is important because, on the

face of it, one cannot assert that to act from force of habit is not to act from a motive unless one is already clear about what it means to act from a motive. We may clear the ground somewhat by pointing out that a motivated action is not necessarily one in which the agent was conscious - episodically aware - of his motive before acting. Nor indeed is it necessary that he should have thought about his motive during those moments immediately preceding his action. If this were an essential part of what we mean when we say that a person is motivated, we should no doubt be committed to saying that few people were ever motivated at all. It is probably true that most actions are motivated,⁴ but it is not plausible to suppose that a person must always have thought about his motive while or immediately before acting. It would seem, then, that we cannot dismiss an action done from force of habit from the realm of motivated action merely on the ground that the agent is not aware of the purpose of his action at some specified time.

More positively, the criterion for the existence of a motive, for most general purposes, would seem to be that the agent should be able to provide, when asked, and given that all other conditions are equal, a reason for, a purpose in, acting. He should be able to say why he is going to act in such and such a way, or why he did act in such and such a way. There

⁴. That not all actions have a motive I have tried to show in Chapter I.

are, of course, various reasons why he may not be able to answer immediately. He may quite well have forgotten why he is acting as he is. The man who sets out to buy a newspaper in order to check his football pools may, after one or two unusual encounters in the street, not be able to remember why he is buying a newspaper when a friendly newsagent casually asks him; but it would be exceedingly odd to suppose that, for this reason, he could not have been motivated. Moreover, it is frequently the case that a person concentrates so closely upon performing a certain action that he temporarily casts out of his mind the purpose, the end, which his action is designed~~x~~ to serve. (This is to put the point naively because in one important sense it would not follow that if I were not concentr^{ra}ating I would be 'thinking about my motive' - though of course I may be.) Yet again, it would be odd to ~~deny~~ hold that his action was unmotivated. It is sufficient if, after some consideration, he is able to supply the answer. Indeed, it is perfectly compatible with the present view that an agent should never remember his purpose in acting. It will be sufficient if he can say 'I know that there was a perfectly good reason why I did this, but I really cannot remember what it was'. I was at one stage led to believe that this latter point conceded too much, and also that it was in some ways incompatible with the view (stated above) that the important criterion for motivation is that a person should be able to

provide a reason for his action when asked. But then, it has been pointed out that this depends upon the equality of all other conditions. Lapse of memory, mental blockage, excessive concentration, will be in the nature of contingent reasons for the agent's inability to state his motive. In each of these cases, we want to say that the agent would have been able to explain if..... where the blank is occupied by an acceptable excuse. Clearly, one unacceptable reason would be '.... if he had known'; but we do not suggest lack of knowledge in this sense when we say that a person may never remember.

I do not wish to conceal the fact that there are many difficulties when it comes to deciding what counts against a man's being motivated. I am merely saying that such factors as those mentioned above need not; and that, on the other hand, it is legitimately claimed that X is motivated when he can supply a reason for acting as he did.

If we now turn to the phrase 'force of habit' in particular, we shall find that actions characterised in this way fall roughly into two kinds. There is that action done by a person who, upon being asked, is able to state his purpose without hesitation. There is, on the other hand, the action which has become very much a part of the doer's routine and for which he cannot supply an explanation other than a statement of habit. Both of these cases may satisfy the criterion of motivation suggested above. The latter is

admittedly more problematical; but if we accept that a person who has merely forgotten his motive is nevertheless motivated, we should also be inclined to accept that a person for whom an action has become habitual and who cannot remember his motive is in a similar position. The stumbling block in the discussion of this point would appear to be, as I have tried to suggest, an ingrained belief that a motive is something which necessarily 'pushes' one into action, something which lies immediately behind one's actions, and sets them in motion. Little wonder, on this view, if one should suppose an action unmotivated because the agent acted automatically, or in general because he cannot remember his motive. This would be the natural conclusion. But it is idle to suppose that we can regard all motives in this light. Certainly some motives - notably, those which Hume termed 'passions' - would seem to fall into this category. We normally think of jealousy, indignation, and hatred, for example, as passions which push us into action; and thus it is sometimes convenient to account for them in terms of this model.⁵ But we need to bear in mind that we also quite clearly regard a man as being motivated when he acts from the consideration that by going to the theatre he will manage to avoid a person whom he does not wish to see. His decision to go to the theatre may have been taken a week or more before the actual evening, and it makes not a

⁵. In this connection see Chapter VII

whit of difference if, when the time comes, he forgets why he decided to go.

There is perhaps a tendency, to which we have already referred, to put all actions vaguely connected with habit in a similar class. It is said of them generally that they are actions in which the agent does not have his mind on his job, as it were. He acts automatically, in a mere semi-state of consciousness; he may not be aware of what he is doing, and may not remember later that he has done it. We have seen that it is not clear that all habitual actions are of this nature. Even if they were, it is more than doubtful, in the light of our earlier remarks, whether this would give grounds for asserting that they are unmotivated. But I want now to consider the whole question in relation to what appears to be a working distinction between the use of the phrase 'force of habit' and the use of the term 'habit' or 'habitual'. By describing it as a 'working distinction' I mean to imply simply that ordinary language seems to contain an implicit acknowledgement that there are times when it is appropriate to describe a person's action as having been done from force of habit, and that there are other times when, though 'habit' or 'habitual' may be appropriate, the phrase 'force of habit' would misdescribe the situation. Elaboration upon this might clear the ground a good deal.

Sutherland's example of the man who locks his back door

every night is instructive here. The same man now arranges to have an outer door constructed so as to make the locking of the existing door unnecessary. Suppose that soon afterwards an onlooker finds him locking the original door, and questions him about it. This is a situation in which the agent may reply 'That was silly of me: it was force of habit'. In so replying he is suggesting, as the phrase itself implies, that he was, in some weak sense, 'forced' to go through the motions. One might almost say - though this is too strong - that he was not responsible for what he did. Had he been thinking, we want to say, the futility of the action would have been evident to him, and he would not have acted so. It is not being claimed that we would not describe the agent's action as habitual nor that we would not say of him that he acted from habit: it is being claimed that in using the phrase 'force of habit' in this situation the agent is deliberately waiving any suspicion that he meant to do it, that it was sensible or intelligent, or that he was motivated. In this case, he is in fact informing us that there was no motive.

One point of clarification needs to be made here. It has been said that, basically, to be motivated is to be in a position to explain one's action, to give a reason for acting. It does not of course follow from this that all explanations are motives. It is certainly true in this particular case, as we have already had cause to mention, that the reference to

habit provides an explanation of the action, and it has been admitted that this is in one sense an answer to a 'why' question. But there are two things to be said about ~~the~~ such a reference. Firstly, the explanatory value which it does have is due entirely to the absence of a motive. In other words, the action is ultimately an unintelligible one. It is not unintelligible because it has no motive. There are many actions which are motiveless in this sense and which are far from being either unintelligible or unintelligent.⁶ But it is unintelligible in the sense that the motive which would have been appropriate^a under circumstances which no longer obtain is known to have been explicitly rejected by the agent himself. Secondly, the reference satisfies a 'why' question only indirectly, that is, by referring to the manner in which the action was performed. It is as though the agent is saying 'I did not have my wits about me'. It explains why the agent performed an inappropriate or unintelligible action; it does not explain why the action was of that kind rather than of ~~66~~ another.

The point about the use of 'habit' or 'habitual' when these are distinguished from the stronger term 'force of habit' is that we do use ~~of~~ them of actions done by people who have their minds on their jobs. 'He habitually leaves the house at 9.0am' - but there is no suggestion here that the agent is not aware of this. He may well use the same words of

⁶ See Chapter I

himself without making this suggestion. 'My nightly door-locking is habitual', he may say, but this leaves entirely open the question of his awareness or non-awareness. But 'I lock the door from force of habit' does suggest that he does so without fully realising it.

Of course we do convey something by our use of the words 'habit' or 'habitual': we convey, among other things, that the agent has acted in the same way on a number of past occasions; that he does the action regularly, or at regular intervals, and so on. The correct use of these terms may therefore depend merely upon observation. The witnessing of actions alone may qualify one for the use of the term 'habitual'; while more is demanded for the use of the phrase 'force of habit'. One cannot assert that the agent who continues to lock the original door after the outer door has been built is acting from force of habit unless one at least knows that the agent is not only aware of the existence of the outer door but is also aware that that door makes the locking of the existing door unnecessary. In many cases, we can learn this only from the agent himself, and so one might be led to claim that the phrase is 'primary' only in cases where the agent himself employs it, secondary in relation to anybody else.

The terms 'primary' and 'secondary' are perhaps not the most apt; but there is no need to attach any great importance to the labels themselves. They are simply intended to bring out

the point that when the agent himself uses the phrase 'force of habit', he is making a comment upon his own action from a position of authority. (This point requires separate treatment, and will be dealt with in the concluding sections of this chapter). This is not to deny that others may have a right to use the term. We have seen, indeed, that there are circumstances in which it would appear to be the only reasonable thing to say. But having a right - in the sense of having good grounds - for a statement is one thing: it is quite another to talk about its corrigibility. In short, it would seem always to be logically possible in the kind of cases we are discussing that the agent, despite all appearances to the contrary, may have a perfectly acceptable reason for doing what he did. This is not necessarily to resort to the notion of private or privileged access. His reason, like most others, will be found in the context in which his action took place.⁷

Where does this analysis lead us in relation to motives? I am still tempted to hold the following simple position: that the case in which the agent replies 'It was force of habit' to an enquiry concerning some action of his exhibits the only species of habit, as it were, which may be said to preclude the possibility of a motive explanation; and this not because the agent was unaware of his motive, not because he was unable to remember it, but simply by virtue of his statement that it

⁷ See pp. 109-110 ff., Ch. II, pp. 63-64, and Ch. VII

was done out of force of habit. By saying this he is implying that in some sense he was unable to help doing what he did, and we do not have motives for actions of this kind. More importantly, however, he is waiving the attempt to look for a motive. He himself is ^{deliberately} ~~deliberatively~~ disregarding the fact that there was once a reason why he should for example lock the first door; disregarding it as irrelevant and inoperative here. He is denying that it 'moved' him to action.

Now it may be that this is all we can and should say in this connection. But it is difficult to resist the thought that there are cases in which a man will admit to having acted from force of habit while denying that this admission points to the absence of motivation. It is confessedly debatable whether it would be legitimate to speak of 'force of habit' as opposed to saying that what happened was habitual, but it is significant that Ryle does use the phrase in precisely this kind of situation: "I certainly can run upstairs", he says, "two stairs at a time from force of habit and at the same time notice that I am doing so and even consider how the act is done".⁸ Granted that this use is a legitimate one, it might seem as though a sub-class of actions done from force of habit requires to be acknowledged in which one has to say that there is no question of waiving the possibility of motive. There are, however, grounds for being reluctant about such an

⁸. The Concept of Mind, p. III

acknowledgement. These are simply that ~~when~~ in the event of an enquiry concerning an action which has been done out of force of habit and which is nevertheless motivated, the agent will not naturally refer to the habit. The original claim was that a man answers 'I did it out of force of habit' only where he rejects the notion of motive; and therefore one might argue that the Rylean kind of case does not really have any bearing upon this.

But it looks, in any case, as though this must remain an open question. There may well be a final answer, but to ~~puse~~ pursue the matter further here might be to run the risk of depriving the whole issue of philosophical interest. It will be sufficient if the chapter has, even at this stage, succeeded in drawing attention both to the paucity of paradigms, and to the 'cobwebby' nature of the material.

It may be argued that a person ^{WILL} ~~may~~ say 'I wanted to keep burglars out' in a situation in which it is known that he is aware of the second door and that he has explicitly acknowledged that it cancels out the purpose of the ritual. Under these circumstances, one may remind him of these facts and thereby induce him to withdraw the motive-statement. He then reverts to 'I'm sorry: it was force of habit'. This would be a significant case because, prima facie, it indicates that the agent's ability to explain his action is not a

reliable guarantee that he is in fact motivated.

In reply to this objection, it must be said first of all that it has no tendency to show that the agent is not the final authority in deciding which motive is applicable. What it does have a tendency to show is that the agent is not the final authority in deciding whether or not he is motivated. But it is not clear that this is a legitimate implication. There is an important sense in which 'I wanted to keep burglars out' is in this context the statement of a genuine motive. This is the end which the action - habitual or not - has always been designed to serve. It is the general explanation under which all the particular actions are subsumed. It is the explanation which, in terms of the practices of this society, (would have) made the action intelligible. He does not - though he might - conduct a process of introspection in order to determine the motive. Rather, he refers to the current norms or standards. Now admittedly, in giving the answer he does give, he is displaying his ignorance or forgetfulness of certain (new) features of the situation, and thus it is that the motive he does give fails to make his action intelligible. This is one way of saying that there was no motive. Yet the fact remains that we normally allow that a person may be motivated by a false impression, where we mean precisely this, that he is in some sense unaware of, or confused about, certain features in the relevant situation.

It is hard to see how the present case differs from this in any material respect. The agent does waive the motive-statement upon being reminded of the additional facts, but he does so not because he realises there was no motive, but because he sees that the appropriate motive cannot render his present action intelligible. Even this is not unreservedly true, for he might, instead of referring to habit, have appealed to the form of words employed in most cases of simple illusion, namely 'I thought.....' or 'I was under the impression that.....', where again we do not necessarily imply that he had consciously thought, or consciously formed the impression.

The general point to be made at this stage, then, is that there is only one case of habit which may be said to exclude a motive-explanation, namely that in which the agent himself asserts that it was done from force of habit - and we have just observed that even this assertion is one which has to be made with reservations. Sutherland is right up to a point, but this is far less than he intended to say. As we have seen, there is more than one kind of habitual action. The door-locking example - the only kind to which Sutherland's thesis is properly applicable - represents just one aspect of a very complex network of actions. The agent himself is really the only person who is qualified to state that he acted out of force of habit. Others are able to do so only because he has

already said this or certain other things which entitle them to use the phrase. Of course, the phrase is, in practice, used very frequently, but also very loosely; for a person who uses it will normally be willing to admit that he makes no assumption about motivation. He will readily admit that he does not know enough about the agent to say whether he is motivated or not. On the other hand, as we have seen, there is that very large class of actions which are described as habits, many of which, for their designation, rest upon the simple claim that they are done regularly. These may or may not be motivated, but to state that they are habits, to state that they are actions which are done habitually, is not in itself to rule out the possibility of motivation, as Sutherland has maintained. One has to probe further into them; one has to know something about the agent, and about how he himself would describe his actions. Then, and then alone, will we be in a position to judge of motivation.

There are certain cases of habit which, because of their peculiarity, deserve separate attention. The points I shall make are, from one point of view, somewhat trivial, but they nevertheless serve to draw attention to a further aspect of the general topic.

We might have cause to say, for example, that a person has a habit of putting on his left shoe before his right.

Surely, it may be maintained, in saying this we rule out the possibility of motivation. And there are two reasons which may lead a person to hold this view. The first is, I would suspect, a prevalent belief that habits usually refer to trivial, everyday routines for which we have no particular explanations. Undoubtedly, habits often do refer to such actions, but they also refer to actions which are of the utmost significance. It is precisely by virtue of this significance that we consciously set ourselves to form a habit of them: it is as though we take out an insurance against lapse of memory, mistakes, and the like. There may also be some tendency to designate such actions trivial or insignificant on account of the 'automatic' manner in which they are performed; but, under the circumstances this is clearly a misleading use of the term.

The second reason is that, on the face of it, what is being described as a habit is not, in the real sense of the word, an action. And if it is not an action, some may wish to argue that talk of motivation becomes inapplicable. There is certainly some ground for discussion here, but it is not clear that the latter inference is legitimately drawn. It will be wise, therefore, to turn to a closer examination of what it is that the term 'habit' refers to in this example.

It does not refer ~~merely~~ merely to the act of putting a shoe on, nor indeed to the act of putting a left shoe on. What is being described as habitual is the act of putting-on-a-left-

shoe-before-the-right. What constitutes that habit is something more than putting on the left shoe, namely putting it on before the right one. One might therefore formulate the following dilemma: if we hold that the term 'habit' is used ~~to~~ refer only to actions, and we also hold that the term is here correctly employed, we must presumably hold that to-put-one's-left-shoe-on-before-one's-right is to perform an action; if, on the other hand, we assert that only the act of putting-one's-left-shoe-on can be regarded as an action, we seem to be ~~g~~ committed to the view that habits cover something more than actions proper.

Let us consider the position once more. There is nothing, no movement, no position taken up or maintained by the agent which can be described as 'putting-one's-left-shoe-on-first' as opposed to 'putting-one's-left-shoe-on'. That is to say, there is nothing in the first description, considered as the description of an action, which is not present in the second. The movements, the procedures, are identical. It follows, then, that 'putting-one's-left-shoe-on-first' becomes significant only in relation to the action of putting-one's-right-shoe-on. One could not, for example, command a person to put-his-left-shoe-on-first in the context of putting on a pair of shoes while at the same time preventing him from using his right shoe. The significance, then, lies in the relationship between the two sets of movements. Clearly the relation is not itself an

action. Neither does it alter the nature of either 'action', considered in itself.

Yet it must be noted that it makes sense to ask both 'Why do you put your left shoe on?' and also 'Why do you put your left shoe on first?'. In both cases, the agent may produce reasons other than a statement of habit. This being the case, it is evident that we may often treat 'putting-one's-left-shoe-on-first' as an action in addition to 'putting-one's-left-shoe-on'. Despite the fact that it does not seem to fulfil the basic requirements of an action,⁹ it does the duty of one. We ask for its motive and expect to receive a sensible answer. Whether or not it must be regarded as an action, it has to be added to the contention that the term 'habit' is used to refer only to actions a reservation: it also refers to certain things which, though they do not meet the basic requirements of an action, nevertheless serve as such. More important for our present purpose is the fact that, though there may arise some temptation to question whether what the habit refers to is an action or not - though we may hesitate to call it an action - we have no similar temptation to withdraw the term 'habit'. We establish what the agent does as a habit on the ground that he does it regularly, and for no other reason; and we include in what is described as a habit the 'temporal relationship' - the priority in time of the one shoe before the other. The general conclusion to be drawn is that, even when

⁹ See Chapter I, & Chapter V

the term 'habit' is used of something which we do not regard as an action, it makes sense to ask for a motive. This is not in itself of any great consequence. What is of consequence is that the general airing of the case brings to the forefront a further and perhaps neglected aspect of the concept of habit, and thus helps to underline its inherent complexity.

Again, we regard smoking as sometimes being a habit; and I want now to consider the kind of cases which it represents. It is clear, I think, that we describe a person's smoking as being a habit when he smokes regularly. In describing it as such, we do not necessarily make any assumptions about the manner in which he smokes - whether he does so automatically or unthinkingly, or whether he considers the matter before every cigarette. The description may depend solely upon observation. There is no reason to suppose that we would wish to alter this description upon hearing that he considered the matter before smoking; but certainly hearing this might effectively eliminate any temptation to use the term 'force of habit', as opposed to 'habit'.

Suppose someone objects that although the smoker's actions as a whole may be described as a habit on the ground that he is often to be found smoking a cigarette, it does not follow from this that each action in the series is correctly labelled 'habitual'. It may be, so the objection may proceed,

that each individual act of smoking is pondered and considered, and is far from being automatic or unthinking. The force of this objection would be that though we use the word 'habit' of the series as a whole, this will have no bearing upon the question of whether the agent acts from habit in doing what he does in the particular case. 'Habitual', it may be claimed, is a word reserved for actions for which the agent was in some sense not responsible. It^s use in connection with a whole series of actions is a weaker or watered-down use.

This point would really seem to turn upon the nature of the 'actional' antecedents in this context. Naturally, we can think of cases in which a man does ponder over, or meditate upon, whether to have a cigarette or not. Thus one who does not usually smoke may do so on a particular occasion because he feels that it is polite or sociable, because he wants to break with traditional patterns (this once), or because he wishes to find a means of distracting his own attention from an undesirable occupation (for once). Now it is theoretically possible that there should be a number of such occasions; but there will come a point at which such pondering cease to be 'genuine', if we take as one of the criteria for genuineness that they sometimes lead the person to reject the prospective action. In other words, our knowing that he ponders in this way after having observed his doing so on a number of previous occasions in no way detracts from the appropriateness of the

statement we are inclined to make, namely that he takes a cigarette out of habit. It may be that, in order to justify such a statement, we shall have to refer the habit back one stage, but this does not matter: 'He ponders out of habit' is a meaningful assertion. We have to avoid the temptation, already mentioned, of supposing that actions may be habitual only in so far as they may be considered as physical movements. 'Suspecting', 'supposing', 'being scared', 'being angry', etc. are all activities which we may, on occasions, wish to describe as habitual. 'Considering' or 'pondering' before smoking falls into the same category. If, therefore, a man considers or ponders often enough, we come to think of it as a habit. We might even go further and assert that he does so out of force of habit on certain occasions - in particular in those situations in which the circumstances indicate that pondering was unnecessary. In short, where the pondering is 'genuine' we would clearly not say that he was acting from habit, but then, equally clearly, we would have nothing which could be called a series of actions falling under the general description 'a habit'; for the pondering is genuine only when it occurs in a limited number of cases, and this is precisely the situation in which the term is normally withheld. There seems to be no reason, therefore, to add any qualification to the statement that the main criterion for its employment is mere repetition and regularity of occurrence; nor indeed would

there seem to be reason to distinguish, in respect of relevant criteria for use, between the term 'habit' used of a pattern or series, and its corresponding adjectives or adverbs used of individual actions in that series.

At one point in his article, Sutherland says: "Of course there are occasions when we are not quite sure how far something is done from a motive and how far it is done through force of habit; someone can lock the back door partly out of habit, partly because he wants to keep burglars out."¹⁰ There are two points worth raising about this statement. The first is one aspect of something which has already been sufficiently laboured: though we do speak of a person acting 'from' force of habit, it can often be misleading. A person does not act from habit if this is on a par with acting from a motive. Even though it can often be equally misleading to regard a motive as an inner thrust or push to action, it is sometimes helpful to perpetuate this picture in order more clearly to contrast it with other forms of explanation of action. A motive is, at any event, something which is 'responsible' for my action; it is what I proffer when someone asks me why I acted. It stands, metaphorically, 'behind' my action, and if it were not there I might very well not act at all. But a habit does not stand behind my action in this sense. If I confess to having acted

¹⁰ Sutherland, p.146

out of force of habit, I am not asserting that some distinguishable anterior event or entity was responsible for what I did. To say that one acted from force of habit can and does have explanatory value, but it constitutes an explanation of a particular kind, and it may be that Sutherland is not consistently aware of this. It is in fact a statement about the way in which I acted. It places the action in the sphere of the automatic, the unthinking, and sometimes the unmotivated. It describes the action: it does not tell us why it was performed. It might constitute the answer to a 'why' question, but it does so only by virtue of waiving the question of reason or motive.

If we regard 'habit' and 'motive' respectively in this light, it is not difficult to see as a category mistake the way in which Sutherland links the two. If I tell Y that X acted out of force of habit, I am not, strictly speaking, telling him why X acted as he did. He may of course be satisfied with this piece of information, but by giving it I do not eliminate the possibility of a 'why' question. He may still sensibly ask it. This question - the 'why' question - except at a further remove, is inapplicable once the motive has been stated. Yet, by linking them both together, Sutherland is suggesting that there are two things both of the same nature - both, that is, standing 'behind' my action, 'pushing' me into activity - from which a man may act. Really, there is only one thing of this

nature, and that is the motive as traditionally - but misleadingly - conceived.

In the second place, what does it mean to say that a person can lock the back door partly out of habit, partly because he wants to keep burglars out? In view of what has been said, it will be evident that I should want to interpret this as meaning that a person may act from habit while yet motivated. Yet Sutherland cannot mean this, for his thesis, as I see it, is devoted to showing that habit, in his sense, precludes motive. If, however, he does not mean this, then what he does mean seems rather peculiar. Is he wanting to imply that a bit of habit and a bit of motive cause me to act? Does it really make sense to say that a person may act partially from habit? No doubt, the expression is used in reference to certain actions, but consider for one moment what we would mean. One thing we are not likely to be saying is that the agent acted out of force of habit, for we have argued that this is even stronger than the simple term 'habit', or 'habitual' - and Sutherland suggests that the action is not adequately described even by these latter. Suppose, then, that we exclude the stronger notion when we say that a man acted partly out of habit. Now one can make sense of this on the present thesis because one need mean no more than that he acted as he did because he had acted in this way on a number of previous occasions, because he was accustomed to act in this way. We mean, in other words,

that reflection upon his own activity was partly responsible for the action. We know what it is for a person to be satisfied that his having done this on innumerable past occasions is a good reason for his repeating it now. It hardly needs saying that 'This is what I always do' is a bad, but notoriously efficacious, reason for acting. But if this is what it means to act partly out of habit, then clearly it does not make sense to contrast it with acting from a motive, for they are now one and the same thing. This will merely be a case in which more than one motive is operative in the explanation of the action.

It may be that Sutherland wishes to emphasise that some actions are done semi-automatically, since to act entirely from habit will, on his thesis, be to act without thinking at all. This is an acceptable interpretation; but it then raises problems about motivation; for the way in which he puts it suggests that it is my not acting purely from habit which allows for the possibility of part-motivation, that, in proportion as one eliminates the habitual aspect, so the motivational increases. But this is bizarre. In so far as the agent is able to say 'I wanted to keep burglars out', the question of motivation becomes to that extent an all-or-nothing affair. To be in a position to say this is to be motivated. We shall indeed see, in Chapter VI, that there is no sharp dividing line between the motivated and the unmotivated, that,

as Ryle commented in connection with another distinction, they "shade into one another as an English day shades into an English night!"¹¹ All I presently wish to point out is that in so far as a person is able, in this example, to say that he wanted to prevent the entry of burglars - and Sutherland explicitly implies this ability - then he is clearly motivated, and all talk of 'part motivation' is without meaning.

I now wish to clarify a point which was perhaps not made explicit in an earlier section of this chapter. It has been suggested to me that there are times when a person may assert, independently of any remarks upon the part of an agent, that that agent acted from force of habit. I wish to give a qualified agreement to this statement, and to show that it is not at all inconsistent with the general trend of the present chapter. Certainly it is true that on some occasions I would seem to have very good grounds for asserting that X acted from force of habit. If X is presented with a new pair of shoes which happen to be laceless and we observe him 'trying' to tie the laces, we can be reasonably sure that he is acting from force of habit. If a man continues to walk to a place where the bus no longer stops in order to catch it, we can also be reasonably sure that he is acting from force of habit. The point which it was intended to establish earlier was that these cases are not significantly different from those in which we go

¹¹ The Concept of Mind, p.IIO

about ascribing motives to people on the basis of 'external' factors. These, and cases of supposed 'force of habit' actions, have this in common: that we are always prepared to be told that X's motive was not what we had supposed it to be, or that X did not in fact ~~ea~~ act out of force of habit. In the shoe-lace case, it may turn out that he was pretending to tie his laces in order to amuse his onlookers, or that he was going through the standard motions in order to satisfy himself that it was possible to do so without actually handling the laces. In short, our imputation of motives and our categorization of actions in this particular way do not and cannot carry with them absolute certainty. This is not something to regret, for, in general, it does not undermine our ability, our justification, for indulging in either. But it does mark a clear distinction between these and the safer and more harmless procedure of classifying a certain action, or series of actions, as habitual. In the latter case, very little, if anything, can count against the genuineness of my description. It depends merely upon my observation of regularity, and I intend to assert no more than regularity when I describe the action as habitual. Whereas, my statement that a person acted out of force of habit (provided it is based upon observation of external circumstances) may often be corrected or revised in the light of what the agent informs me. This is why, in general, we rarely use the phrase 'force of habit' (except loosely) on occasions when the information at

our disposal is insufficient. And this is why I have termed its use on the part of the agent 'primary' and its use on the part of an observer 'secondary'. In most, but not all, cases, we shall have to take 'secondary' to mean 'derivative' for, properly speaking, if the statement were to carry the claim of certainty, it should be based upon information imparted either directly or indirectly by the agent.

There is one further point which calls for clarification. I have so far been speaking as though the agent were ultimately responsible for the 'truth' about his motive, and I have suggested that there would be something exceedingly odd about any attempt to contradict him, except, of course, in cases where we have grounds for thinking that he is deliberately deceiving us. I have done so intentionally, because I believe there is a sense in which the agent is indeed the final authority in this matter.

The psychologist often claims to provide us with what he terms the 'real' reasons for our actions. The word 'real' is, in this context, misleading, and it is partly because the psychologist's 'real' does not mean real at all that I have chosen to ignore, and will continue to ignore, the psychologist's account of motives in this thesis. His 'real' reasons are those given in ~~wa~~ terms of various sub-conscious desires or impulses, and these are invariably termed real even in cases where the

agent himself is clearly capable of providing a reason or motive. My present point will be that the claim that these are the real reasons is an arbitrary one based upon a particular conception of human motives, and that the term 'real' is relative to the interests of the person carrying out the investigation. For anyone who is interested in the various sub-conscious impulses and springs to action, explanations in terms of the agent's stated reasons will be in some sense bogus; and this will also be so of explanations in terms of biological, sociological, or anthropological factors - yet clearly these are all legitimate explanations of human conduct, depending upon what particular aspect of human behaviour the researcher is concerned with. The psychologist has no priority in this field, and he would therefore have no right to discount as bogus, false, or unreal - for, in general, this is what he implies - other forms of explanation.

His own explanation is in many ways a causal - quasi-mechanical - account of human behaviour. It is this because, in most cases, the explanation he provides is not something of which the agent was already aware. To be aware of the 'cause' before consulting a psychologist is to know that his help is unnecessary. I ask for the cause of my behaviour when I do not know what the reason or motive is, when I nevertheless feel that what I did was not freely decided upon, when I suspect that there is something which is not part of my conscious self,

not part of me as a thinking being, which is responsible for certain actions. The cause of a human being's action is not linked to its effect in the way in which a person's reason or motive is linked to the corresponding action. The latter is intimately bound up with what the agent intends doing, and there is a sense in which it cannot be detached from this. But the cause of a person's action is not related to the action in the same way, and we normally want to claim that it is describable independently of its effect.^{12.}

What is more, it may be supposed theoretically possible that the psychologist should provide a causal explanation in this sense for every single action a man performs, and this regardless of his overt reason for performing them. If this is so - and there is little reason to doubt the possibility - and if he claimed that all these explanations stood on the same ~~plain~~ plane, then presumably they would all represent our real reasons for acting, or would constitute the only possible reasons for acting. Yet we have only to envisage such a situation in order to perceive the futility of the claim that he is presenting us with the 'true' explanation or the 'real' reasons. In order for this to be a genuine or serious claim it would have to be accompanied by a campaign to dispense with 'superficial' or stated reasons for acting, or at least an exhortation to distrust or ignore, where possible, such reasons.

^{12.} This issue is considered in more detail in Ch.VII

But this would be undesirable, to say the least. We know, as a matter of fact, that this would render human intercourse, social life, as we now know it, extremely difficult, not to say impossible. It is accepted that fellow-members of our own society are responsible, rational, beings who may have reasons for acting, and who sometimes do not; beings who, sometimes, may not know why they acted, or cannot remember why; and beings who may sometimes try to deceive us. It is the presence or absence of these reasons which primarily interests us. For the most part, we realise that these particular explanations of conduct may or may not be compatible, from one point of view, with some alternative explanation which the psychologist may provide. But this is all we would be entitled to say about the matter. The incompatibility is incidental. There will be occasions on which we shall want to attend to what the psychologist has to say, but what he says has no bearing upon the 'reality' or the 'genuineness' of the agent's stated reasons. Provided that he is not attempting to deceive us, these are his reasons, no matter what anybody else may tell him.

It is in the light of these remarks upon the psychologist's account of conduct that I want to consider the more serious objection that in cases which resemble 'rationalisation' (as the psychologist terms it), the agent may need to be told his real reason for acting, and that he invariably accepts it as such. There would seem to be no standard case of rationalisation,

and so I shall consider three classes of action about which a person may be said to 'rationalise' concerning his motive.

In the first place, an agent may be genuinely at a loss to know why he did a particular action, and he toys with various means of completing 'I must have done it in order to....' until, quite arbitrarily - though sometimes quite reasonably, in view of the circumstances in which the action took place - he chooses one of them. Once he has chosen, he will presumably give this as his reason upon every occasion on which he is asked. The important thing to notice about this case is that the agent remains in a state of mind in which he is prepared to be told what the explanation really was. What is more, provided it is a case where he has not merely forgotten his reason, then what he is seeking, and what the psychologist may tell him, is what caused him to act in the way he did. That is to say, though we speak loosely of the explanation in terms of reasons or motives, nobody supposes that this was the agent's reason (that is, his reason) for acting. It is the inappropriateness, or, Austinianwise, the infelicitous use, of the possessive adjective which marks off the psychological account as being a causal one. It will certainly be true that there was a reason why he did what he did; but it will not be true that he had a reason for doing it.

It is the second brand of this type of rationalisation which presents the real difficulty for the point I wish to make.

This is a case where the agent fills in the blank in a similar way but of whom it will not be true to say that he has an open mind about the matter. That is to say, he convinces himself that whatever explanation he adopted really was his reason for acting; and he presents this reason when asked, not with provisos, but with conviction. How does he now stand in relation to the psychologist's account, and would we not admit that the latter's account is the true one, that the only thing which distinguishes this man from the previous is his dogmatism?

The psychological explanation is not the 'true' one for the reasons which have already been mentioned: it is merely one explanation among others. Neither should it be the explanation we would naturally accept - granted our desire to accept some explanation and not deny that there are any at all, and granted our awareness of the agent's rationalising. That which distinguishes 'rationalised' reasons from others would appear to be that in the latter case the reasons are postulated after the ~~even~~ event, whereas in the former they 'exist' before the event. The latter are considered to be legitimate; the former not. There is no doubt that there is room for a distinction of this kind, but whether the distinction is sufficiently well-defined to warrant the use of such labels as 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' is not at all clear. I shall argue that in many cases the distinction is non-existent, and that the

corresponding labels are therefore inappropriate.

It must not be thought that in having a reason for something, an agent has the only possible reason, in the sense that all notion of choice in the matter is ruled out. I mean that it is not always the case that the agent, in explaining his action, is doing something which had, in a sense, been pre-determined. It is not that there are any other reasons now that he has given us this one, but that had he not mentioned this reason he might have mentioned another, equally acceptable. In other words, in giving us a reason for doing what he did, or what he is going to do, the agent is expressing his decision to render the action explicable in a particular way: he is deciding that the action is to be explained in this way rather than that. We are not, explicitly, given George's reason for shooting his friend Lennie in John Steinbeck's short story 'Of Mice and Men', but we have a general idea of the range of reasons which would be relevant, and we know that, by virtue of the circumstances, these reasons are closely inter-related. If he had said 'I had to shoot Lennie because not to do so would be to permit the possibility of his suffering greatly', then, in the context of the story, we could have inferred immediately the existence of other, related, reasons. It might, for example, equally have been said: 'Since Lennie is destined to die in any case, I will kill him because then his death will be less painful', or

'I have always been responsible for Lennie and I must therefore be responsible for his death now'. In view of the relationship which existed between the two men, it is inconceivable that George should not have had all these things 'in mind'. Given the story, and this relationship, there is no way of deciding which reason George would choose in order to explain his action, if he were called upon to do so. To this extent, there is a limited choice involved; but once he has chosen, we may regard his choice as an expression of the way in which he wants his action to be explained. On a different level, and in a different world, Charles March, in C.P.Snow's novel 'The Conscience of the Rich', can be seen to be in a similar position. His decision to leave the practice of law for the practice of medicine may be explained by referring to one reason in particular, but in the context of the story one can think of a number of reasons, each of which would have been equally satisfactory.

Now, if we look upon 'having a reason' in this way, it may be possible to see cases of rationalisation in the same light. That is to say, the agent must be regarded not as 'inventing', 'invoking', or 'introspecting' reasons, but rather as choosing them. He is confronted with a number of inter-related reasons means of explaining the action he has already performed, just as the person who intends to perform a certain action is similarly confronted with various means.

Reasons, after all, are not entities which we carry around in our heads. To say that a person has a reason for what he is going to do is in fact to say that he is able to explain the proposed action and, in a similar way, to say that the subject of rationalisation has a reason is to say that he is able to explain what he did. The 'rationaliser' is doing no more than making a choice, except that his is at a later stage. His choice is no more arbitrary than that of a person with the so-called 'legitimate' reason. He examines the context in which the action occurred and chooses the type of reason which he could have been expected to have - and in many contexts there will be a number of these.

It will be seen, then, that the gulf between having reasons beforehand, and rationalising afterwards, need not be as great as some would imagine. So long as we are willing to accept as his own reason - and his own uncontrovertible reason - that which the agent gives us before acting, there is also good ground for accepting the rationaliser's reason since, as I have tried to show, they are not essentially different. Of course it must be added that we are not always in the same position as Steinbeck's 'George', or Snow's 'Charles'. This does not matter very much. What does matter is that such characters display one 'way' of 'having a reason', and that this is a perfectly acceptable way. So long as the process of rationalising is held to be analogous to this, labels such as

'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' are without content in this context.

(Mr Bedford has pointed out to me that it is not only the psychologist who claims to discover a person's real motives: we all do so in everyday life. In answer it must be said that I have talked primarily about cases of rationalisation because I believe that these embody the strongest ~~argument~~ argument against the view that the agent is his own authority in the matter of motives. I am not entirely convinced that the considerations which have been brought forward are satisfactory counters to these cases in particular; but, for all that, it may be considered worthwhile to test the theory at its extremities if only in order to draw attention to some more general details of a truth too often overlooked.)

The final case which might conceivably be regarded as a piece of rationalisation is that of which the drug-addict or alcoholic is representative. An addict may give as his reason for calling at Y's house the fact that he wished to speak to Y about a ~~certain~~ project for which the addict was responsible. We may later learn that Y was in possession of certain drugs which the addict was known to crave. Now of course he could have been deceiving us. That does not matter. Provided that he was not trying to deceive us, then there was no sense in which he was mistaken about his motive or reason. To say that he was really hoping that Y would enable him to purchase some drugs is

possibly to say that he was subconsciously moved, and this is, as we have suggested, to give a quasi-causal explanation of the action. It in no way contradicts what the addict has told us. Indeed, the addict himself may well admit that he was subconsciously motivated in the above manner while nevertheless claiming that he genuinely wanted to see Y about the project, that, indeed, he was consciously thinking about it while approaching Y's house.

In short, then, the psychologist's 'really' or 'real' does not mean 'principal' or 'primary', without qualification: it means 'principal' or 'primary' for the psychologist, in his own domain.

These remarks upon the notion of rationalisation will, I hope, tend to preserve as intact the claim that the agent is the final authority in matters concerning his own motive. There may indeed be other situations (apart from those in which rationalisation takes place) in which we should wish to dispute the agent's statement. There are clearly some situations - to which we have already referred - in which we should want to say that the agent is 'fishing around' the circumstances in order to find a reasonable explanation for his action. The important thing about these cases is, I would argue, that the agent is here prepared to have others enlighten him on the nature of his motive. These cases are not, initially, proper candidates for the claim that the agent is his own authority; for

indeed, by his own reckoning, he does not know why he did
what he did.

IV. MOTIVES AND 'REASONS'

We have so far been talking as though the terms 'reason' and 'motive' are synonymous. I believe that this is justifiable - though, if it were not, this would not matter materially, since the aim of this thesis is to discuss the concept of motivation, where this term covers those things in general which we offer as explanations of (reasons for) our actions. Nevertheless, there is some *prima facie* ground for supposing that the occasions on which it will be appropriate to use the word 'motive' are not necessarily those on which the term 'reason' is equally appropriate. I shall therefore devote some space to a consideration of these grounds.

It may not be out of place to remind ourselves at the outset that the unwritten rules governing the use of certain words in language are sometimes fairly well-definable and sometimes almost indefinable. Those governing the use of 'red' fall into the former class and those governing the use of 'good' into the latter. It is of no particular consequence if the rules are more or less indefinable. Absence of definition does not entail incorrect usage. But it is always very tempting to suppose that those areas of language which are distinguished by their paucity of rule-governance are easy prey for the tidy-minded philosopher; and those who succumb to this temptation often succeed in misrepresenting or distorting an otherwise uninhibited usage. I shall argue that this is very

largely what has happened in the various attempts to distinguish sharply between motives and reasons. R.S.Peters' account is a case in point.¹ It seems to me that no consistent distinction of the type which Peters' envisages exists, and that the concept of motivation is by no means as distinct and as clear-cut as he represents it as being. The arguments of the preceding chapters have, I hope, gone some way towards demonstrating this general point.

Peters is prepared to assign to motive-explanations three characteristics. In the first place, he says, "we only ask about a man's motive when we wish, in some way, to hold his conduct up for assessment", where "there is an issue of justification as well as of explanation".² Secondly, motives are reasons of the "directed sort".³ And thirdly, motives must be reasons why a person acts.⁴ It will be obvious from these quotations that Peters is not denying that motives are reasons. These three characteristics are meant to indicate the way in which motives differ from other reasons. But, as I shall try to show, this is precisely what they do not indicate; and I am not altogether clear that Peters himself was convinced of the consistency of these characteristics. Perhaps this would explain what seems like an attempt to support their existence by referring to the subtleties of ordinary as opposed to scientific language.⁵ It is true that ordinary language does

¹In his book 'The Concept of Motivation'.

²Loc.Cit.,p.29

³Loc.Cit.,p.31

⁴Loc.Cit.,p.34

⁵Loc.Cit.,p.29

observe a number of fine distinctions which scientific language does not, but this fact is not in itself important for the present case. In order to demonstrate that the above characteristics really do attach to motive explanations, it would require a further step on Peters' part to show that the relevant ordinary language distinctions are consistently observed.

There is no doubt of the truth of his first statement that the word 'motive' is used in contexts where conduct is being assessed and not simply explained; but we cannot satisfactorily use this as a means of distinguishing between reasons and motives because it is obvious that we would also use the word 'reason' in the same sort of context. There need be no difference at all between the two statements 'He must have a motive for entering his neighbour's house' and 'There must have been a reason why he entered his neighbour's house!', where it is known that the entry was affected without permission. It is compatible with either statement that the person stating it should be aware that the agent is deviating from accepted social patterns. The suggestion that the reason or motive might be discreditable is also compatible with both. We could indeed go on to discuss further cases where Peters' distinction is so reversed that 'reason' is used in contexts of suspicion and 'motive' in contexts of innocent curiosity. But this particular kind of investigation into the uses of language can serve no

useful purpose. It could be rendered conclusive by converting it into a strict scientific enquiry; but a philosopher could conduct such an enquiry only at the risk of belying his vocation. As things stand, he has the right to appeal to language only in so far as he is a user of that language. As such, it will be possible that he will be contradicted by some other person, especially when the point which the appeal is intended to support is of the present kind, that is, the discussion of a word which has come to be linked closely with some other word, the uses of both of which are fairly interchangeable. We are able to say, in connection with Mill's attempt, in the Essay on Utilitarianism, to show that pleasure is desirable, that where he uses the word 'desirable' he ought, perhaps, to be using the word 'desired'; and we can support our criticism by referring to the way in which 'desirable' is normally used. It is possible to do this because there is no ambiguity: the rules governing the use of this word are clear-cut. Many appeals to language fall into this category. But the motive-reason distinction does not, and, consequently, it takes only another moderately proficient user of the same language to rebut the suggestion that certain characteristics attach to the word 'motive' and not to the word 'reason'.

If we ask a man's motive for getting married, says Peters,

we imply that this is, for him, an efficient way of getting to some other end. "The implication is that he is not sticking to standard moves." This may be so, but it is not the use of the word 'motive' in particular which suggests this. The implication would have been the same had we used the word 'reason'. It is the fact of our asking the question at all in a context where explanations are not generally demanded that gives rise to this implication. The word we use is neither here nor there. It is the contextual inappropriateness of any question at all which Peters seems to have overlooked.

With regard to his second characteristic - the directedness of motive explanations - the point remains the same, that this is no criterion for distinguishing them from other reasons. But one thing must be noted about Peters' elaboration upon this point. He says: "Now, as I have shown, not all reasons for action are of the directed sort." This statement, taken in isolation, is acceptable. But he continues: "We can explain a man's action in terms of traits of character, like considerateness, and punctuality. These may be reasons why people act; but they are not motives." ^{6.} What he may be suggesting, if we take his illustrations as representative, is that reasons which are not motives fall into the class of quasi-causal explanations - those explanations which an external observer, rather than the agent, might be expected to give. But if this is what Peters is suggesting, it would be a gross

^{6.} Op.Cit.,p.32

misrepresentation of what we mean by reasons in the field of human conduct. When we make surmisals about a person's reasons, we are speaking about the explanations which he would, or might, give, in the relevant situation; and it is certain that he would not give an explanation in terms of his considerateness or punctuality. It may indeed be the case that X's turning up on time is due to what we call his punctuality, and there will be times when this is precisely the type of explanation we seek; but X himself is not likely to quote his punctuality in an attempt to explain or justify his own action. He is more likely to say 'This was the time appointed for my arrival', or 'Mr Y expected me to be here at this time'. The nearest he may approach to a reference to punctuality will be in some such statement as 'I like to be punctual on such occasions', but even this is not, strictly speaking, a reference to punctuality, as such. He did not act 'ffom' punctuality in the way in which a person may act from jealousy. Perhaps the point now borders upon triviality, but this much must at least be said: that if it is inappropriate to speak of considerateness or punctuality as motives, it is equally inappròprie to speak of them as reasons.

Whichever way we interpret the above quotation, Peters appears to be in difficulty. If we summarise the first statement as 'Not all Xs are Y', then the second statement could be rendered either as (a) 'Some Xs are Z' or (b) 'The

remaining Xs are Z'. If we adopt the interpretation represented by '(b)', we shall have to draw the conclusion just mentioned. But this would be preposterous on the ground that reasons for action are simply not exhausted by the class of which considerateness and punctuality are illustrative. In addition, it is obvious that we do, in practice, use the word 'reason' of explanations which Peters is proposing to call 'motives'.

On the other hand, if we adopt that represented by '(a)', this would seem to leave open the possibility of there being reasons for conduct which are like motives in being of the directed sort. Yet if Peters wishes to use the directedness of motive explanations as their distinguishing characteristic, then to admit that other reasons may share this feature would be evidently self^F-defeating. Clearly, there is no way out of this impasse.

As a matter of fact, it is not difficult to establish, by way of the same kind of appeal to the use of language, that reasons as well as ~~as~~ motives have this quality of directedness in common with the latter. If we penetrate the terminology of 'directedness' and 'directive dispositions' we shall find that Peters means simply that all motives name or imply a goal. After citing 'He married her for the sake of her money' and 'He went ^{INTO} ~~into~~ politics in order to advance himself' as exercises of directive dispositions, he says, "All such

explanations assign a goal to the individual whose motives are in question."⁷ But not only is this not startling: it is a statement which would have made as much sense had we substituted 'reason' for 'motive'. We certainly say, for instance, 'His reason for getting married was his desire to share his wife's fortune', or 'That politician's reason for entering politics was his desire to advance himself'. It is true, of course, as Peters implicitly acknowledges, that reasons of this sort can generally be incapsulated in single-word labels such as 'greed' or 'ambition', and that these labels frequently - though not always - carry with them the descriptive term 'motive' rather than 'reason'. The association of the word with these labels can, perhaps, be traced to its use with the older philosophers such as Hume,⁸ and present-day psychologists, for whom the word denotes a mental impetus to action, a 'drive', a moving force. But it is important to stress that these labels are not in lieu of, but the incapsulation of, reasons. When we speak of greed or ambition as motives, we do not regard them as long-standing characteristics bereft of cash-value. Their being motives is in itself dependent upon their being responsible for certain actions - in this case, marrying for money and entering politics. Yet once this is realised, one can no longer suppose that the labels in themselves constitute a complete explanation. They are in fact

⁷ Op.Cit., p.32

⁸ See Chapter VII

incomplete summaries. Completing them, or filling them out, entails a statement such as 'He married her for the sake of her money', etc. But the fully blown-out statement is nothing more nor less than a reason. One-word labels, then, might be associated only with the term 'motive' and not with the term 'reason'; but this is insignificant when one realises that they are simply incomplete descriptions of what is ultimately as much a reason as a motive.

But regardless of - what I hope I have shown to be - the insignificance of the association of the term 'motive' with single-word labels, it is abundantly clear that we think of a man's reasons for action as being of the directed sort. To say that an action had a goal is to say that the agent had a reason or motive for what he did: it does not reserve a linguistic priority for the latter.

It is strange, incidentally, that Peters should quote 'considerateness' and 'punctuality' - which I take to be third-person descriptions - as examples of reasons for action in a context of what could be called first-person explanations. It is true, as he states, that these could not count as motives, but then, so long as we regard them as third-person explanations, they cannot count as reasons either. The argument is again self-defeating. Considerateness is not a motive because it is not of a directive nature: it does not state or imply a goal. But by the same token it is not a reason. To quote

considerateness as an explanation of Jones' helping the blind man across the road is one thing: it is quite another, as we have seen, to state Jones' reason or motive for doing so - where this is taken to be the naming of a goal. The assertion no more precludes the possibility of a reason which is entirely inconsistent with the description contained therein than it does a motive.

It must be noted that a distinction between first- and third- person explanations is something which reasons and motives have in common. It might be put as the distinction between what the agent says in order to explain his own action, and what an observer may say about the same action. The latter's account will be based upon one or both of two sources. Firstly, there may be knowledge of the agent as a person, the product of which would be the mention of a character-trait.⁹ Secondly, there may be knowledge of the context in which the action took place:¹⁰ here, we assign motives or reasons to a person on the basis of established norms or patterns. Thus a man may have killed his wife's lover because he was jealous; or he may have done so to obtain the money which his victim was known to possess. The first-person explanation - what the agent himself says - may or may not be consistent with these. Now,

⁹ In this connection, see Chapter II.

¹⁰ In this connection, see Ch. III, pp. 109-110ff., and an indirect approach to the same issue in Chapter VII

provided it is agreed that the above distinction is one which reasons and motives share, then in discounting considerateness and punctuality as motives, it is as though Peters is proposing to ignore third-person explanations of conduct. There would be no particular objection to this - indeed, there is some justification for it - if he had applied ~~it~~ it to both reasons and motives; but in fact he accepts 'reason' and rejects 'motive' as descriptions of these two words.

Perhaps the present objection to Peters can be brought out more clearly in the following way. He is able to achieve a distinguishing characteristic at the expense of confusing first- and third- person explanations of conduct. Thus if we allow that these two kinds of explanations exist for both reasons and motives, what Peters has done is to make a comparison between first-person motive statements and third-person reason statements. In the light of this confusion, it is easy to see how directedness appears to be peculiar to motives. Third-person statements of considerateness or punctuality are not indicative of goals or ends. To endow a motive with this curious quality of directedness is in effect to demand that it be the agent's own explanation, for only he can have the goal. Thus the third-person statements of jealousy, indignation, greed, etc. - all of which may be described as being motives, especially in a law-court - will, if it turn out that the motive was in fact something else, constitute a 'loose' use of

the word. But 'reason' has a similar use, as I have tried to show. This is why it is possible to put forward considerateness and punctuality as reasons before we know - and even despite the fact that - the agent later confesses some other reason. Just as it would be silly to take the loose or third-person use of motive as being representative when considering motives as opposed to reasons, so it is equally silly to take the corresponding use of 'reason' for the same purpose, as Peters has done.

The third characteristic of motives as a class of reasons for action is, as we have noted, that they must be reasons why a person acts. "By this is meant that the goal which is quoted to justify a man's action must also be such that reference to it actually explains what a man has done.... The motive must be the reason why he did whatever he did."⁴¹ On the face of it, this is a peculiar thing to say for, without some qualification, it appears to be false. We are familiar with the concept of non-operative motives. We know what it is, under this description, to 'have' a motive in both its present and its past tenses; and we know that having a motive in this sense is quite compatible with either a confession or a denial on the part of the agent. When we discover that Jones did not after all commit the murder we do not therefore withdraw our imputation of motive. Indeed, quite often, we go out of our

⁴¹. Peters, op.cit.p.34

way to stress that, anyway ("even if I was mistaken"), he did have a motive.

It is difficult to know what force the 'must' - used twice in the above quotation - has. If we look at the statement naively for a moment and assume that motives fall primarily into two kinds, operative and non-operative, then we could suppose Peters to be ignoring the second type in the present statement. But if so, what he says is uninformative: naturally, all operative motives are the reasons for action. On the other hand, if we suppose him to mean that of all the things which may be regarded as candidates for the term 'motive' the only one which really counts as such, from a purely linguistic point of view, is that which is operative, that which was actively responsible for the action, then, as we have had cause to observe, this is plainly false. It hardly needs saying that the concept of non-operative motives is a familiar one.

The first interpretation is possible but unlikely. We must therefore concentrate more closely upon the second. There is certainly a sense in which the motive which was actually responsible for the action takes priority over all other candidates. This is the straightforward sense in which it, and not any other motive, 'moved' the person to action. It was the motive or the reason and not just a motive or a reason. But the priority involved is one of 'activating ^{power} ~~power~~', whether this be

a matter of degree or an absence-presence disjunction. It is not a linguistic priority. It does not, in other words, constitute one of the rules governing the use of the term 'motive', and it would seem as though the problem of formulating some of these rules was^{what} Peters originally set himself to surmount. Thus he says: "Our preliminary problem about the concept of 'motive' is to specify its delimiting criteria within the general class of 'reasons for action'." He goes on to say: "There are, I would suggest, three characteristics shared by explanations in terms of motives which account for the difficulty of fitting them neatly into the framework of types of explanations¹² which has been outlined." These characteristics are justified by frequent overt appeals to the way in which the word is used. The delimiting criteria, then, were not originally intended to be arbitrary but representative. It can therefore only be assumed that in the present context Peters has confused what constitutes an operative motive with what constitutes a legitimate use of the word at all.

In this connection it is significant that in the ensuing section on 'The Psychologist's Concept of Motivation' Peters repeats the statement of his third characteristic and adds: "This is a logical point - part of the analysis of what is meant by 'motive'."¹³ Perhaps this tends to support the

¹². Op.cit.,p.38

¹³. Op.cit.,p.38

contention that he has confused two distinct issues here. It is trivially true that 'operative motive' is the reason that actually moves the agent to action; it is false that 'motive' is the reason that is actually operative. Admittedly, as Peters points out, the O.E.D. defines 'motive' as "that which moves or induces a person to act in a certain way....", but this in itself does not explicitly lay down the condition that in order to be a motive a reason must be an operative one. It is important to observe the difference between the statement of the function a motive can perform, and the statement of the function it is performing or has performed. A motive does not surrender its designation simply because it is not operative on any particular occasion, any more than a paper-weight does when it is not being used.

In general, it must be said that we no more demand that a motive, in order to be a motive, must be the one upon which the agent in fact acted than we demand that a reason, in order to be a reason, must be the one which in fact influenced the agent. If we did demand this, then the probability is that we would demand it of reasons also. And the tautology that an operative motive is that which is responsible for the agent's action could certainly be stated of reasons as well.

V. MOTIVE AND INTENTION

While it may not be possible to draw a legitimate distinction between motives and reasons, it is certainly not only possible but also, as I shall try to show, necessary to draw a distinction between motives and intentions; for I do not believe that it is ~~possible-to~~ plausible to regard intentions as a sub-class of reasons for action in the way in which it is prima facie - though only prima facie - plausible to regard motives as such a sub-class. In fact, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, there appears to be no underlying or consistent distinction in usage between 'motive' and 'reason'; but at least if there were such a distinction such that we regarded a motive as a special sort of reason, then, it is being suggested, intentions do not form a comparable sub-class - and this because I do not believe intentions are properly called reasons at all.

Again, I shall consider these two concepts in relation to particular accounts of a fairly representative nature; and the latter part of the chapter will be more specifically centred upon 'intention'.

Anthony Kenny, in his recent book 'Action, Emotion, and Will' describes motives as backward-looking, and intentions as forward-looking, reasons for action.¹ It has to be said first of all that it is perhaps misleading to speak of intentions as reasons for action at all. What I intend doing is not, as such,

¹. Kenny, op.cit., p.92

my reason for doing it. It is true that to state a person's intention is frequently to explain his action: X's journey to London may be partly or wholly explained by the disclosure of his intention to see a show there. And it is precisely because what a person intends to do is usually what he wants (in a positive sense) to do that the statement of intention often constitutes a sufficient explanation of the action. If X just wants to see the show, then it is pointless to seek some further explanation of his going to see it. But what I intend doing is not always what I want to do. Most of us, at some time or other, intend to do things which we know to be extremely distasteful. In these cases, an intention-statement does not provide an adequate explanation of the action.

But not only are motives and intentions logically distinct in this way: there is a further difference which, though trivial, must be emphasised. The concept of motive is primarily an explanatory one; the concept of intention is, for want of a better word, primarily informative though contingently explanatory. That is to say, the statement of intention is meant to inform ~~of~~ us of the goal at which an action is aimed. Since, as we have seen, the statement of the goal does not always explain why the action was performed at all, we cannot regard an intention-statement as primarily explanatory; and when it is explanatory it is not directly but indirectly so. Its being explanatory is dependent upon the

². See Chapter I, p. 9.

assumption that what the agent intends to do is what he wants to do and nothing else. Intention is, as it were, the thread underlying all purposeful action: it connects, but it does not explain. If this analysis is correct, then it is misleading to regard intentions as reasons for action, as Kenny has done.

However, Kenny's major thesis is that intentions are forward-looking. It is, I think, possible to agree with this statement in so far as it concerns intentions, but at the expense of demanding that motives be regarded as forward-looking in the same way. Kenny says that "the man who goes to the fire to get warm, if asked why he went to the fire, may say that he did so because he was cold, or that he did so in order to get warm. In the first case, the reason given is backward-looking; in the second case it has the form of the report of an intention."³ It is in the light of this paradigm that he goes on to assert: "We can see why 'out of a desire to...' does not assign a motive in the same way as 'out of ambition', and why 'because I wanted to...' is not a backward-looking reason as 'because he killed my father' is."⁴ Certainly it is possible to see Kenny's point in this latter case. It is, as it were, the contemplation of a past event (the killing of my father) which causes me to act, and there is evidently a difference between this and merely wanting something for no reason at all. But though the difference undoubtedly exists, it

³ Kenny, op.cit.,p.91

⁴ Kenny, op.cit.,p.93.

is far from being sufficient to show that all motives are backward-looking, and this would appear to be Kenny's purpose.

X His original paradigm, together with the first of the two comparisons quoted above, point only too clearly to a game of linguistic juggling. 'Out of a desire to...' is surely as good and as genuine a way of stating a motive as 'out of ambition' is. One could almost always substitute for the latter phrase others such as 'out of a desire to better himself', '....to get on in the world', '....to advance himself', etc. But quite apart from whether motive-words like 'ambition' are readily substitutable in terms of such phrases, it is a matter of small importance so far as the question of motives is concerned. There are innumerable ways of filling in the details of 'out of a desire to...', each one of which would be regarded by common usage as a perfectly proper statement of a motive. Kenny himself admits that there are several different ways of stating a motive.⁵ It is strange, therefore, that he should, at the same time, wish to regiment all motive-statements into a single sentence-frame, namely, backward-looking reasons.

Again, speaking of the relation between motives and X intentions, Kenny says: "One cannot have an intention for a motive, but one may have a motive for an intention..... This is because motives and intentions admit of ascription only to voluntary actions: and intending to do something is itself a voluntary action, whereas having a particular motive is not."⁶

⁵ Op.cit.,p.

⁶ Op.cit.p.85

But it is relevant to point out here what Kenny appears to have overlooked: while we often ask what made, or what caused, a man to want to do that, we never ask what made him intend to do it, or what caused him to form that intention. Yet if Kenny were right in saying that we can have motives for intentions, one might expect to find support for this in ordinary usage. The obvious way to overcome this objection would be to assert the synonymy of intending with wanting; but Kenny, far from wishing to assimilate these concepts, quite rightly distinguishes between them. The difficulty arises, I believe, because he is treating of both motives and intentions in a pre-action state, and as such it is difficult to give any content to the intention without in some way specifying that in which the intended action consists.⁷ For this reason, it makes little sense to speak of having a motive for an intention as though this were some kind of anterior happening a step removed from action. At this stage, to have a motive for an intention is the same as to have a motive for doing or being something in particular - for an intention is always to do or to be something. But if intentions must always be formulated in this way, it is pointless to speak of having motives for them: the latter are meant to explain the actions which the formulation of the intention expresses. Thus, to ask a man why he performed a certain action is the same as to ask why he intended to perform

⁷. Op.cit., p.87

it, provided that the action is one which is correctly described as intentional.

But though this is the type of consideration which indicates the transparency of the concept of intention, one must not make the mistake of concluding that the concept is also superfluous. If it were always possible to infer from actions themselves what the intention of the agent was, the concept of intention might not loom as large as it now does in the study of human behaviour; but this would still leave unaccounted for the many cases where we are concerned not with post-action explanation but with pre-action prediction. Moreover, it is only in cases of what we may call schematic action that one can infer - and here again not with absolute certainty - what the agent intended. Putting one's pyjamas on would be a case in point, for here it would always be reasonable to infer that the agent is going to bed even though the inference might not in fact be borne out. An intention is not transparent in the same way when it is serving an explanatory purpose after the action. Actions frequently seem pointless until the intention is stated. In such cases, the full action, so far as its physical aspects are concerned, is in view, but it is not self-explanatory. The statement of what was intended does not ~~me~~ mirror the action as it would do had the action not yet occurred: rather, it provides the underlying thread without which the action would have no meaning. It is the

function of the statement of intention which has changed, and not its nature; indeed, the statement itself, except in so far as its tenses are concerned, does not vary.

It is, then, as I have tried to show, the transparency of the concept of intention in its pre-action state which accounts for the impossibility of motive-ascription. Discovering why a person performed a certain action normally precludes a further enquiry into why he intended to perform it.

It is interesting to note that Kenny regards 'intending to do something' as an action.⁸ I am not convinced that this standpoint can be justified. One of the fundamental characteristics of action is that it should bring about some change in its object. This condition allows us to account for such borderline cases as 'thinking', 'listening', and 'learning French', even though we may be inclined to use the word 'activity' of them rather than 'action'. In all cases of action or activity one may say that something is 'being done' to something else. If someone is thinking, it will be true to say that the object of his thought is being thought about; and if someone is learning French, it can be said that French is being learned. Admittedly, if someone is intending, it can reasonably be said that something is being intended; but though the ~~ew~~ wording suggests a similar model, the difference may be brought out by considering certain questions and the answers which would normally be appropriate to them. It makes

⁸Op.cit., p.87

sense to answer the question 'What are (or 'were') you doing?' with 'I was thinking'; and one may ask 'How long were you thinking?', 'When did you first start thinking that?', etc. These questions are not applicable to intentions. Intending is not an activity. One does not spend one's time intending - except, appropriately enough, when this is contrasted with doing. And there was never a time when X started intending nor a time when he finished, though there was, of course, a time before which and a time after which he was not intending. Intending does not and cannot encroach upon or interfere with other activities. It would make nonsense to speak of X's being distracted from his studies because he was intending, or intended, to visit the art gallery. In so far as we might say such a thing, we would mean that it was his thinking about the art gallery, and not his intending, which distracted him. Intending is a state, not an activity, such that when X is said to be intending something, this means no more than that he is in a position to state that, all other conditions being equal, a certain event, or series of events, will come about. (Considered from this point of view, there is indeed little to distinguish between intentions and motives. I have already made a parallel point in connection with motives in Chapter III, and a similar line will be taken in Chapter VII). To say that a person was thinking about something, however, is above all to say that he is doing something which may well interfere with

other actions or activities. Of course, a person may have been thinking about something for months, and we do not mean when we say this that he has been constantly occupied; but we do at least mean that there have been periods of thought during which time certain other activities may have been neglected; and we also mean that his thinking took time. But we cannot have periods of intending in quite this way. There may have been periods at any moment during which, had I been asked, I would have been able to make a statement concerning my future behaviour, and the periods during which I was able to do this may have terminated every so often; but again my intending did not take time, nor did it or could it interfere with any other activities.

These considerations should, I think, be sufficient to show that intending is neither an action nor an activity. What is perhaps strange is that Kenny himself, in a later chapter,⁹ produces similar considerations to indicate the same conclusion. This would appear to contradict the statement presently being discussed, that 'intending to do something' is itself a voluntary action.

It must further be noted that if one questions the term 'action' or 'activity' as applied to intending, one may also, by implication, be questioning the applicability of the adjective 'voluntary'. Even if we allow that certain states

⁹ Op.cit., Ch.VIII

or attitudes may in special circumstances be described as voluntary, it by no means follows that intentions, in so far as they may be regarded as states, fall into this class; nor is it easy to imagine any special circumstances under which one might be inclined to say that X was or is voluntarily intending to do so-and-so. It is true that X is responsible for the action he has performed or is going to perform, and in another sense of 'responsible' it is true that he is responsible for intending to do that action: nobody else intended it for him. But it is not true that X chose to intend in the way that he chose to act, nor that he decided to intend in the way in which he decided to act. Certainly X's intending did not come about by accident, but it is notorious that one cannot legitimately infer from the fact that a person acted not accidentally that he was therefore responsible for what he did in the sense that he did it voluntarily. In particular, if there is a sense in which X is not responsible for intending Y - and we have seen that there is such a sense - it does not follow that his intending Y came about accidentally. Indeed, the very idea of intending accidentally is itself contradictory, and it would evidently be unjust to suppose that Kenny had not realised this. No doubt, he takes 'voluntary' to be opposed to 'involuntary' such that when intending is described by the former it is meant to imply that I can help my intending in a way in which I cannot help my motives. Yet the confusion arises

not so much from the mere use of the word 'voluntary', but more importantly from its use in conjunction with the word 'action'. Kenny is saying \neq not that intending is voluntary - a statement which in itself and in one sense of the adjective one would hardly dispute - but that it is a voluntary action; and this raises, as we have seen, awkward questions about deciding and choosing, concepts which are not properly associated with intending, as such. Such an association could doubtless be established if it were possible to regard intending as an action; but this in its turn might well depend upon being able to regard deciding or choosing as a possible if not necessary prior activity, the attempt to do which would be not only arbitrary but also, it would seem, inconceivable.

In connection with this latter point, it is significant that Kenny attaches a footnote to the assertion that having a particular motive is an involuntary affair.^{10.} In this he refers to Miss Anscombe's statement that "it is a mistake to think one cannot choose to act from a motive. Plato saying to a slave 'I should beat you if I were not angry' would be a case."^{11.} Kenny objects that while one may be motivated to an action, and, knowing this, choose not to act, one cannot, having chosen to do a certain action, settle what motive one will act from, "except by choosing to perform a second action which may set the first in an altered context." What is important is the fact

^{10.} Kenny, op.cit., p.88

^{11.} G.E.M. Anscombe, Intention, 22

that Kenny is now talking in terms of 'choosing' to do actions, and his language in this footnote certainly suggests the underlying assumption that all voluntary actions are chosen or decided upon. This may in itself be a perfectly proper assumption, but it does entail his commitment to the view that intentions, since he describes these too as voluntary actions, must be chosen or decided upon. It has already been shown that we do not speak of choosing or deciding to intend.

Despite the fact that Miss Anscombe's remark is a little misleading, there are certain other borderline cases which, though they cannot be said to refute Kenny's thesis, do at least indicate the kind of thing it ignores. A person who decides to postpone the giving of financial help to one who claims to deserve it may do so on the ground that he must first feel a genuine sympathy for the claimant; and there are circumstances under which one may wish to regard this as an acceptable way of 'choosing one's motive'. It is not that he is merely hoping that the relevant feelings will suddenly occur: rather, he is setting himself to understand the other man's predicament, and there are definite steps which he can take to achieve this. He can, for example, make certain enquiries about the ^{claimant's} ~~agent's~~ address, his general activities, his own ability to extricate himself from the financial straits into which he has fallen, the extent to which he is to blame for his present position,

and so on. It is during the course of this investigation that he may come to feel sympathetic towards the man, and it is out of this 'genuine' sympathy that he may now act. It is true that the underlying motive for this investigation itself was the desire to understand, or even a desire (perhaps not explicitly acknowledged) to be sympathetic; but the action he finally performs for the agent claimant is now motivated not by a-desire-to-be-sympathetic but by his sympathy. No doubt, there will be times when it will be correct to state that the very decision to investigate presupposes an initial desire to help the man; but I have been concerned to isolate an acceptable situation in which one does not have to make this presupposition in order to interpret it. It is certainly conceivable that there are men of strict principles who feel, quite impartially, that in a case of this nature, in order to help a person, they must do so from a socially acceptable motive. Complete impartiality would ensure that if the results of the enquiry demonstrate a straightforward indolence, the potential benefactor would be not only unsympathetic but possibly actively antagonistic.

I am not wanting to argue that this example indicates a straightforward choosing of, or deciding upon, one's motive, but I do wish it to be seen as a case in which the motive is not involuntary. It did not just happen that X became sympathetic: he took active steps to be so. He made an effort to

feel sympathetic provided the situation warranted it. Of course he could not have 'turned on' a feeling of sympathy at will; it is in this sense that one can never choose one's motive. But one can choose to try to act from a particular motive, and this is different from a case in which one's motives are involuntary. It is this very diversity of the concept of motivation and related concepts which it is the primary purpose of this thesis to stress: the impossibility of fitting motives into a single, simple, model; the danger of defining them in terms of involuntary happenings, or of dispositions, or of backward-looking reasons. (It is worthwhile noting, for example, that the distinction between backward-looking and forward-looking reasons, which is for Kenny the difference between motives and intentions, is for Miss Anscombe simply the difference between two kinds of motives). It is, I believe - and one must liken him here to Ryle, Nowell-Smith, Peters, and, as we shall see,¹² even Hume - Kenny's eagerness to restrict and thus define the concept of motivation for the sake of a piece of philosophical tidying-up which has resulted in his ignoring at least one of the very many ways in which a man may be motivated.

However, if Kenny imposes restrictions upon our use of the concepts of motive and intention, J.A.Passmore's analysis,^{12.a.}

¹² Chapter VII

^{12.a.} Symposium on 'Intentions', P.A.S.Suppl.Vol.XXIX, 1955

though he is concerned only with intentions, is also restrictive. He is preoccupied with what he terms two "different models of an intention". One of these models is demonstrated by Henry Pulham, the man who takes his bowler hat from its peg every morning, is handed his umbrella and his attache case, opens the front door, closes it carefully behind him, and so on. These actions are semi-mechanical in nature; they are performed as regularly as clockwork every morning; but we would not say of them that they happened by accident. Indeed, we would, quite legitimately, describe them as intentional. The other is what Passmore calls the 'planning model'. This "assimilates intending to deliberately planning a course of action."¹³ He quotes from Sir John Salmond a definition which is presumably paradigmatic of this view: "Intention is the purpose or design with which an act is done. It is the foreknowledge of the act coupled with the desire of it... An act is intentional if, and in so far as, it exists in idea before it exists in fact."¹⁴

It is probably undeniable that there are these two models, as the other symposiast, P.L.Heath, is only too eager to point out. What is not clear is whether it is correct to regard this as a disjunction of intentions, that is, as two ways in which a person may intend or be intending. There is nothing which can be defined as an entity called an intention present in either

¹³. Passmore, op.cit., p.132

¹⁴. Salmond, Jurisprudence, 8th edition, 1930, p.393

case. In both cases, it is true to say that X intends or intended to perform an action if he is or was able, in a dispositional sense, to say what he is or was going to do next, or at some future date. (An essentially parallel point was made in connection with motives proper in Chapter III). Now if this is the case, Passmore's planning example must be seen not as the model of an intention but as the model of a certain kind of action, namely, that kind of action the means to and the results of which have been calculated beforehand. But it cannot be said that one is more genuinely intending here than in the more mechanical cases. It is not as though the mental activity involved in the former somehow enhances or intensifies the agent's intending. This activity is itself the result of an original intention. Nor indeed is the agent doing or being anything different in this case when he is intending than he is in the other. It is true that one would not normally say (because one would not have cause to say) that Henry Pulham intends wearing his bowler hat tomorrow. He habitually does this, and so it is, in a sense, uninformative to use the expression. If, however, there were some independent reason for thinking that tomorrow Henry Pulham will break his habit, then, regardless of whether anything has happened to alter Pulham's own thinking upon this matter, one might have cause to assert 'Yes, he intends wearing his bowler hat tomorrow too'. In general, we speak of what a man intends doing only when we wish to be informative. It is therefore no

accident that the action, information about which we impart in stating someone's intention, often is one which is described as having mental antecedents: it is a planned action simply because the agent does not do it regularly - he has to think about its execution.

It is difficult to see why Passmore (and indeed Heath as well in this connection) should be unduly worried about Pulham's behaviour. Heath maintains that this case falls somewhere between that in which 'intentional' is contrasted with 'unintentional' (lack of responsibility) and that in which it is contrasted with 'casual', 'habitual', or 'unpremeditated'.¹⁵ Yet Pulham's case seems to satisfy most of the conditions necessary for the claim that he intended to do these actions in the former sense; and further, it is not immediately clear that the latter sense is corroborated in ordinary usage at all. Certainly it may be the case that actions which are correctly described as casual, habitual, or unpremeditated, are also unintentional, but there is surely no inference from the correct use of the former to that of the latter. In particular, if an action is intentional, there is nothing to prevent it from being habitual or unpremeditated. This may be said without, I believe, assuming or postulating a definition of intention as such - a move which in the present context it is desirable to

¹⁵. Heath, op.cit., p.148

avoid. It is unnecessary, in discussing intentional action, to define what one means in the sense of committing oneself to one of the two models mentioned above. But it is important to discuss the way in which ordinary usage handles this concept, especially in relation to words such as 'habitual' and 'unpremeditated'.

The distinction between habitual actions and those done from force of habit is fairly clear-cut. We have already discussed this distinction at some length in Chapter III, and we concluded that the use of the word 'habitual' denotes regularity only, and never (except in a loose sense) does it refer to the unintentional or the unmotivated. But the regularity with which an action is performed can hardly be construed as a reliable mark of its unintentionality. (The man who attends the cinema every Friday night surely illustrates this). Even if we consider those actions which are done from force of habit as opposed to those which are merely habitual, it is important to realise in connection with them that we are often responsible for making actions quasi-mechanical in nature.¹⁶ We form an intention to do things which later we allow ourselves to do from force of habit. Ordinary usage will support the statement that such actions cannot always be regarded as unintentional. One would have grounds for doubting their intentionality only if they no

¹⁶. See Chapter III.

longer seemed to have point, or if they led to situations of which one could not expect the agent to approve.¹⁷ If this be true, then the contrast which Heath draws between intentional action and habitual (force of habit?) actions is hardly plausible. The man who locks his back door every night is perhaps a good example of one who may be acting from force of habit, but unless one had reason to believe that this action was in some way pointless one would ~~not~~ normally assume that the action is intended. The fact that an action was habitual in this sense is hardly sufficient ground for questioning its intentionality.

Similar reference to a kind of action with which most of us are familiar should be sufficient to show that the further contrast between intentional and unpremeditated action is not easily supported. One must think in particular here of those actions or activities which are based upon the agent's reaction to objects in his environment. One might suppose, for example, that it is the sight of the mosque for Mrs Moore, in A Passage to India which causes her to enter and explore the building, but we do not have to suppose that she said to herself "Ah, a mosque; I haven't seen the interior of one before; I will go in and have a look round." She merely went in, and of course she intended to do so. This is representative of a large number of actions which are far from

¹⁷. And we saw in Chapter III that even this has to be said with reservations.

being habitual or semi-mechanical. We can take it that Mrs Moore was fully aware of what she was doing, perhaps even more aware than Henry Pulham was of his actions; but these actions were not premeditated, thought-out, or planned - not at least if these descriptions carry their usual meaning.

However, it will be wise not to disregard Heath's contrast until we have discussed one further point of importance. During the course of an interrogation, one could easily imagine Mrs Moore saying, "Of course, I hadn't intended to visit the mosque....". One has to admit that the word 'intend' is often used in just this way, and, on the face of it, this is an argument in favour of the contrast between intentional behaviour and unpremeditated actions. But in cases of this sort, it is not enough to examine the way in which the offending expression is ordinarily used. It is ~~th~~ more to the point to examine the revisions which one who uses the expression would be prepared to make in the light of certain questions. It is clear in this case, I think, that Mrs Moore would be speaking of a period of time prior to the actual circumstances in which she found herself on the evening of her visit to the mosque. She had recently arrived in India and, until this time, the idea of sitting in a mosque had not 'entered her head', as we say. Therefore, we can reasonably take her to mean here not that she hadn't intended to visit the mosque (despite the fact that this is what she says) but rather

that she had not intended until..... and then we insert a reference to the new situation. She means merely that her intention was a snap-decision.

In a similar way, a person may say: "I didn't really intend to go to the theatre.... ". I want to suggest that here too he is not necessarily expressing an absence of planning or calculation beforehand: he may rather be expressing the fact that he was either not fully responsible for what he did (in the sense in which he was persuaded against his will to attend, or in the sense in which circumstances obliged him to) or that he was unable to make up his mind about going (and was in fact uneasy about it on his way there and perhaps even during the performance). If this analysis of these two uses of the word *is* correct, it surely illustrates that there is no legitimate contrast between intentional and unpremeditated behaviour; and this, taken in conjunction with our denial of the supposed contrast between intentional and habitual, should lead us to see Henry Pulham's actions as a fairly straightforward example of intentional behaviour.

What is of fundamental importance to the notion of intentional action is that a person should know either what he is going to do, or what he is presently doing - just as it would seem to be a basic requirement of motivated action that a person should be able to explain or justify what he did. This

awareness in connection with intentional action is more immediate in some cases than in others; but in general one may ask a person's intentions as well with respect to what he is now engaged in doing as with respect to what he will be doing. It is only a contingent matter of fact that we can normally see for ourselves what a person is presently engaged in doing, though it is doubtless this fact which explains why some have been induced to draw a sharp distinction between what they regard as two ways of intending. Passmore falls into this class, while both Kenny and Heath, it would seem, would deny that activity which was ^{un}_{pre}meditated was really a case of intended activity at all.

VI. THE PERIPHERY OF MOTIVE AND INTENTION

For the most part, we have been discussing clearly-formed motives and clearly-formed intentions. It must not be inferred from this, however, that intending and not-intending, being motivated and being unmotivated, are always black-or-white distinctions.

Nevertheless, the way in which the 'positive' state blurs into the 'negative' state, and vice versa, is often misrepresented by writers on this subject. Thus Professor W.H.F. Barnes put forward one prevalent view when he said, in an article on 'Action' in Mind, Vol.L, 1941,¹ "We intend many things which we never come to the point of choosing to do." And one has to say that, on the face of it, this statement has some undesirable implications. It may well be that many intentions never achieve fruition. That is to say, there are many intentions upon which we never act. But surely part of what we mean by intending is that we have chosen to do or to be something. To intend to do or to be something is in a very real sense to choose to do it. Yet it is obvious that Barnes takes the distinction between intending and choosing quite seriously. "There is something which occurs between intention and action", he says, "namely, what we describe as choosing or deciding or resolving or making up one's mind to do such and such."² It is difficult to give to these concepts, considered

¹. p.247

². p.247

as succeeding the act of intending, any content. Intending itself is avowedly unamenable to analysis, but the difference between a pre-intending state and a post-intending state is at least clear-cut: at one stage X was not in a position to make a statement concerning his future behaviour, whereas at the other stage he was. Granted this analysis, what sense can we now give to the statement that, in addition to intending, X has also chosen, or decided, or made up his mind, to do so-and-so? All these terms surely denote the same thing, namely, that, all other conditions being equal, X will at a certain time or upon some future appropriate occasion perform a certain action; and it matters little which of these terms we use to describe the ~~action~~ situation. One might indeed argue that if X intends to visit a friend, there may come a second stage when he will be required to choose when to do so. But his choosing to act at a particular time is in no way different from the forming of his original intention. It may well be that the act of choosing a particular time is in itself a distinguishable activity, but it was of the same logical type. The term 'intend' would be a thoroughly acceptable substitute to describe what X did in the second case. In so far as he chose to meet Y at 8.p.m - and in so far as his choice is admitted to be a conscious one - he also intended, decided, made up his mind to do so, etc.

It is noteworthy that on the following page,³ Barnes refers

to Prichard's distinction between deciding to do something on some future date and 'setting oneself to do it',⁴ and he casts doubt upon its validity. But this doubt takes precisely the same form as the doubt which I have - and I think most people would - cast upon Barnes' own distinction just outlined. Barnes says ".... When I decide now to do something at some future date, I am not sure that I need to set myself to do it at that future date. The decision in the past seems sufficient to bring about the action...."⁵ But, if we assume for one moment that there does exist a coherent distinction between intending and deciding with respect to the present point, one might make an essentially parallel remark in reference to Barnes' point, namely, that it is not clear that I have to decide to do a particular action after I have already formed an intention to do it.

Of course, in stressing that intending and deciding are one and the same thing in the present context, I do not wish to blur what is in other respects a perfectly legitimate distinction. I can decide certain things which I cannot intend. I can decide - and take time over deciding - that a monarchical society is superior to a republican one; I cannot intend this, and even if I could, I could not take time over doing so. Intending is a substitute for deciding only when the latter concept concerns doing or being things. (I can,

⁴ H.A.Prichard: 'Duty and Ignorance of Fact'. (Annual Philosophical Lecture to the British Academy, 1932)

⁵ Barnes, op.cit., p.248

of course, also intend to have things, but this is parasitic upon my intending to do things about getting them). Again, the process of deciding cannot be equated with that of intending, assuming that we may meaningfully speak of such a process: we saw in Chapter I that this was at least debatable. Deciding may take time; it may be regarded as an activity which can encroach upon and interfere with other activities. Intending, on the other hand, is something we must regard as instantaneous; it is not an activity, and it does not take time. The important thing is, however, that whenever I decide, or choose, or resolve to do or be something, I am also intending; this is a single step which may be described in different ways.

It is not difficult to see how Barnes has been led to draw the above distinction. In the final paragraph,⁶ the case of Hamlet is used as a paradigm. "The motive is revenge", says Barnes, "the intention is to kill his uncle." He then goes on to point out that the situation is a little more complex than this simple statement indicates. There is what he calls the "detailed working out of the motive" - the kind of death which Hamlet's uncle deserves, the reason why this particular kind of death is necessary, and so on. These considerations are meant to delineate the intention. The motive "must not only develop itself freely into a detailed plan; it must also develop in such a way as to accommodate itself to the conditions

⁶. Paragraph IO, p.256-257

prevailing. If, and only if, it develops in this way have we a real intention. When the process is as complete as it can be before any overt change can be initiated, a primary (provisional) choice takes place, which embodies the real intention."

There is little doubt, I think, that this is an elaborate, over-complicated analysis of what might be termed a period of mental activity prior to action. It is misleading to suppose that there exists a gulf between the original (unreal) intention and the 'final choice' - the gulf which Barnes, in this article, consistently tries to perpetuate. It is indeed only by emphasising such a gap that he is able to present an account of the half-formed, incomplete, or partially unacknowledged intention or motive. The mistake in this account would seem to stem from the assumption that the whole period of time, from the stage at which the original intention to kill his uncle was conceived by Hamlet, and continuing through all the intermediate steps to the final fruition, is to be regarded as a continuous whole, a single if prolonged event in the life of Hamlet, something which had a beginning and an end. But the light in which Shakespeare saw his drama is not necessarily the model for the philosophical analysis of the concept of motive and intention. It is the deployment of this model which has, I believe, resulted, in this article at least, in what is a fundamentally misleading account of motive and

intention.

It may be noted that Barnes gives no content to the final, 'primary', choice. If we suppose he means Hamlet's decision to murder his uncle, then one cannot possibly distinguish this from the original intention to do so. (If X intends to vote Conservative at the General Election, it would, in one important sense, be silly to ask whether he has decided or chosen to do this, for his intending implies that he decided or that he chose). If, on the other hand, Barnes meant by 'choice' the decision to murder his father's brother in this way, rather than that; in these circumstances, rather than those, then this looks like a mental event of a different order from the general intention to murder, merely because the content of whatever we define this event as (intention, or choice) has altered. The point seems to be that Barnes ~~defines~~ the final step as one of choice because he employs the 'drama' model, because he does not see the various steps in the working out of the motive - or alternatively the forming of the real intention - as isolated events, to be treated as such in ordinary life. That he is using the drama model in this way is indicated by his use of the phrase 'real intention' (which, incidentally, is italicised, presumably for the sake of emphasis, in the article itself). The implication is quite clearly that Hamlet's original intention was in some sense unreal, in need of modification, or further delineation. Now of

course there is a sense in which an intention may be in need of modification or further delineation, a sense in which it has to^{be} brought to a state susceptible of formulation, and this sense is one on which I want to elaborate in the following pages; but the account which is sketched by Barnes does not seem to me to approach it. His account begins at the point where Hamlet intends (decides) that his uncle shall be murdered. This at least - the intention to murder his father - is something which Shakespeare makes clear in the scene in which the short play is enacted before Hamlet's uncle. It is important to stress this because it indicates the existence at a particular point in the play of a fully-fledged intention. This it is which underlies the subsequent activities of Hamlet, the activities which Barnes describes as the working out of the motive.

But it seems to be false to regard these activities as the gradual modification or delineation of the intention. They should rather be regarded as separate, clearly distinguishable steps connected by the original goal. These steps themselves will be preceded by intentions. If one imagines a modern Hamlet who has decided to dispose of someone, it will be reasonable to assume that he will, for example, make enquiries about an effective brand of poison, that he will visit a chemist, that he will at some time or other deposit the fluid in a cup of tea, etc., - and one might go on imagining a whole

series of actions of this nature, directed towards a single goal. These activities are admittedly given coherence by the desire to murder, and this desire in turn by a motive of rēvenge or jealousy, or the like; but there is no change in the original intention. The end or goal of all these activities remains constant. No amount of planning or scheming can alter or make clearer what is intended. These activities are understandable only in the light of this intention, which implies that the intention must be fairly clearly formed in the agent's mind in order that the subsequent actions may be described as intelligent. The things which the agent does towards the achievement of his goal are intended, and so of course is each action, so far as it is a conscious action at all. These are further intentions which follow logically from, are in some important sense dependent upon, what is initially intended; but we do not regard them as forming a part of the original. If this be true, it will be agreed that there is no justification for a distinction between a 'real' intention and some earlier one only half formed. It will also be seen that the final, 'primary', choice, so-called, if it is not merely a confirmation of the original intention, is really just another intention - to murder by poison, for example, rather than with a gun. It is one of the features of a conscious, rational, being that he is continually forming and discarding intentions in the light of the circumstances in which he finds

himself. That he should be able to state his intention either with respect to what he is now doing or with respect to what he will be doing at some future date is indeed the criterion for saying that he knows what he is doing. There is no harm in linking intentions by reference, in a particular context, to one which may be regarded as central or fundamental; but this is no ground for the use of the terms 'real' and 'unreal', 'perfect' and 'imperfect', etc. The periphery of motive and intention is to be located in other conditions.

Francois Mauriac, in his account of the predicament of his character Thérèse,⁷ well illustrates these conditions. The latter is accused and acquitted of the attempted murder of her husband Bernard. On the long return-journey from the court-room to her home, Thérèse has time in which to recount and reflect upon the events preceding her arrest. In particular, she is concerned to reconstruct, as honestly as possible, these events in preparation for the explanation which she feels her husband will expect. But in fact it turns out to be something more than this. It is not only to Bernard that she must explain, but also to herself. There are times, during this intense period of recollection, when she wonders how she came to do what she did, when she wonders whether she really wanted or intended to do it - and if she really did intend it, how could this intention have come about? "I shall have to begin again from the beginning", she says, "But what is the beginning

⁷. In the novel of the same name.

where our actions are concerned? Our destiny, once we begin to try to isolate it, is like those plants which we can never dig up with all their roots intact.'". Nevertheless, the drama of her childhood and adolescence gradually unfolds itself, the smoothness and continuity of the account being interrupted only by the regular attempts to remember why this happened, how she was responsible for that. She says "'I married him because.... '", but there is no answer, nor can she supply one. Yet she maintains that she knew what she was doing; she wanted to marry him.... Gradually, she is able to extract from the context of her marriage, and the shared activities of a newly-married couple, the sense of boredom, ⁱimprisonment, and frustration underlying it all. And there was, too, the vague desire to escape, to be free. Perhaps all this was her motive for the crime she was later to commit. Yet she liked Bernard; she bore no grudge against him.

The day came when Bernard unwittingly took an overdose of his 'Fowler' drops, the medicine ⁱwhich contained arsenic and which had been prescribed for his previous illness. Thérèse witnessed the event, and yet said nothing. Her action - her failure to act - is justified by the thought that she was probably too lazy to speak, and no doubt she was tired. But "for what was she hoping at that moment?", asks Mauriac. And "'I can't believe that I deliberately planned to say nothing'", says Therese to herself. Here, then, is an account of the

half-formed, the ill-defined, intention. In one important sense she knew what she was doing; or alternatively, she knew that she did not do something which it was in her power to do; and she knew also that the prevention, the prohibition, came from within herself. Her present disbelief stems not from the perception of some discrepancy in the facts as they present themselves to her, but rather from her very acceptance that the facts were as they were. Her disbelief is not really disbelief at all, but a child-like refusal or repudiation. Her disbelief takes the form of expressing surprise that the facts should be as they are, surprise that she, as a rational being, rational even at the moment of her weakness, should have been capable of remaining silent. But the vague, ill-formed intention to murder was there, and it gradually becomes plainer, more distinct.

I have recounted in detail these passages from Mauriac's novel first because they represent more vividly, more explicitly, what is described in Barnes' article as the 'working out of the motive'; secondly because they illustrate an importantly different interpretation of this expression; and thirdly because this is precisely the type of case which we regard as being on the borderline of intention and not, as Barnes seems to believe, the standard model. There is, I believe, an important difference between the man who forms an

intention and plans his subsequent activities in the light of this and, on the other hand, the man who stumbles vaguely and uneasily, in a Thérèsian fashion, towards a goal he but dimly perceives. It would be misleading to speak of unconscious motivation here. Thérèse was not a candidate for the psychoanalyst: the sign-posts of her journey were clearly marked, from a retrospective point of view. She represents the majority of rational beings, for whom opportunities, chance situations, can suggest ends of goals previously unformulated, provided the motive, considered as a potential explanatory concept, is present. For Thérèse, as we have seen, there was no original and deliberate intention to murder her husband. But the groundsheet of motivation was perceptible: the boredom, the sense of imprisonment, the detestation of her husband's activities. From this alone nothing might have ensued had it not been for the chance illness of Bernard, the Fowler drops prescribed by the doctor, and her witnessing of Bernard's accidental consumption of the overdose. This latter event is what Thérèse herself later describes as the 'first step', so far as one could speak of a definite beginning at all. But this first step was by no means comparable with that of Hamlet. It was nothing more than a suggestion of what might be possible. Nor was the second step - also deliberate, also rational - the full acknowledgement of an intention. She deposited the drops in Bernard's glass not in fulfilment of a pre-conceived desire to

murder, but in order to be really sure that it was the Fowler drops which had been responsible for Bernard's vomitations - "'It was simply that I was curious... '", she says. But as Mauriac, relating the explanation she gave to Bernard, says, "she could only have acted in that half-mechanical, that somnambulistic fashion, because for months past she had not attempted to resist, had, indeed, been encouraging, criminal thoughts."

These passages bring out what I hope is now evident, namely that there is an important difference between Shakespeare's case and that of Mauriac. It looks very much as if Barnes had, in this article, fallen prey to the sometimes useful but often, I think, pernicious device of philosophical regimentation, finding its expression in this case in the attempt to embrace the whole concept of intention (and perhaps motive also) under a single model. It is one of the prime aims of this thesis to show that this cannot be done.

By way of a speculative digression from what has already been said, it is interesting to compare, very briefly, Mauriac's description of the situation of Thérèse with the dispositional account of motives which we examined in Chapter II. It will be remembered that Ryle classes motives as dispositions (inclinations, tendencies, etc.) - dispositions being always translatable into 'Whenever.. ' or 'If... then' propositions.

Now there is a sense in which Thérèse's motives may be regarded as dispositional. One might formulate them in the following way: "Since this woman feels a sense of boredom and imprisonment; since she feels that life without her husband would be a happier one; then, given the right sort of situation, combined with the right sort of opportunity, she may attempt to murder him." But there are one or two important differences which ought to be emphasised. We may say that Ryle's man who boasted from vanity satisfies the "law-like proposition that whenever he finds a chance of securing the admiration and envy of others, he does whatever he thinks will produce this admiration and envy" primarily because one can assume prior knowledge of the agent's vanity on previous occasions. (We saw in Chapter II that this need not always be the case, that Ryle's thesis may be said to rest upon a natural tendency which human beings have to perpetuate motives in others, having no reference to the past record of those who possess them. However, if one disregards this tendency - or alternatively if one holds that Ryle's case must in fact be based upon acquaintance with an existing character-record - then the Thérèse situation may be seen as an interesting counter-example here). If the boredom of Thérèse was to constitute a law-like proposition of the kind which we have mentioned, one would require precisely the same grounds for assumption, that is, in this case, information concerning recurrent boredom, sense of imprisonment, and the like.

This information is absent in Mauriac's account, and of course intentionally so. Thérèse was not meant to be a woman of this nature. Her physical environment, her sexual relations with Bernard, the general sense of captivity by a family obsessed with its inherited traditions combined to produce, to create, a temperament the description of which would not previously have been applicable to her. In the light of these circumstances, it is difficult to see how one could formulate a law-like proposition. One could, of course, formulate a very general kind of proposition which would have to include detailed reference to the circumstances in which Thérèse happens to find herself at this stage of her life; and one could go on to state the general possibility of attempted murder under these conditions on the basis of parallel situations in the life of others. But it is extremely doubtful whether this can be termed a dispositional account at all; and even if it were such, it is clearly not what Ryle had in mind. Ryle's interpretation of the statement 'He boasted from vanity' - notwithstanding what was said in Chapter II - very strongly suggests that the person who is described as vain is one who is habitually so. Thérèse did not habitually have a sense of imprisonment and boredom in the sense in which this belonged to her nature.

VII. THE ROLE OF WANTING AND DESIRING IN THE EXPLANATION OF HUMAN BEHAVIOUR: EMOTION VERSUS REASON AS MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS.

I want to turn, finally, to the concept of wanting and desiring as a means of explaining human behaviour. This is of considerable importance within the general group of topics discussed in this thesis if only because, ultimately, as we saw in Chapter I, all actions are to be explained by reference to wants or desires, no matter how we may care to characterise them. One of the central themes in this chapter, therefore, will be the discussion of what kind of explanation wanting provides, and this will very naturally lead into the reason-sentiment issue in Hume. I shall first of all try to show, by hinging the discussion upon a particular, but representative, criticism of Hume's thesis, that capitulation to his position is inevitable if the discussion is conducted purely on his own terms. I shall then turn to a consideration of some of the presuppositions underlying Hume's account of human motivation, and try to show how they fail to fit the facts of human experience.

I

Hume's general position on the reason-sentiment issue is well enough known. He holds that reason can never be a motive to action. This is justified on the general ground that everything

we do is the result of some desire or inclination, that the reasons for doing what we do can always be traced back until ultimately we arrive at a point at which the only answer is 'I just wanted to'. If one asks a person why he does exercise, he may reply that it is because he desires health; if one asks him why he desires health, he may give the further answer that it ensures against pain; but if one presses him on this matter, he will finally answer that he does not want or does not like pain. The ultimate cause of any action, he argues, can always be traced back to a desire, or an inclination, or, more generally, a passion or sentiment. Thus anger, fear, and jealousy, can also be motives to action, and these are perhaps more favourable to Hume's thesis, for they are more clearly opposed to the function of reason, and illustrate more accurately how, in the face of them, reason remains perfectly inert. Hume sees reason primarily as a means of indicating how we may best obtain the ends which have been previously willed by desire, or inclination, or passion. It functions, as it were, only at the behest of desire. And thus Hume is led to say that 'Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions.'

Now the opposite point of view is held, perhaps pre-eminently, by Plato. Reason is, for him, supremely practical. That is to say, it can and does have an influence upon conduct; and in fact he argues that the human soul - which he sees as

being composed of three parts - functions properly only when reason is predominant. One of the ways in which Plato seeks to demonstrate that reason can have a practical influence upon conduct is by reference to the example of a man who is thirsty, and who sees a pool of water, but who nevertheless refuses to partake of it because he is informed that the water is poisoned. Since it is only his reason or his understanding which can inform him of this fact, then it is clearly this faculty which is in opposition with his desire for drink; and it is therefore this faculty which has won the day.

Hume would interpret this situation by saying that while it is certainly reason which points out that the water would poison me if I drank it, it is nevertheless my infinitely stronger desire not to be poisoned which has really won the day. That is to say, properly speaking, it is a conflict between two desires, the one a desire for water, the other a desire not to be poisoned; and the stronger one wins. It is not a conflict between reason and desire: reason alone is powerless to move me to action.

J.D.Mabbott points out, in an article entitled 'Reason and Desire',¹ that the function of reason in Plato's example is not that of pointing out the means to ends which have been previously desired. What it does is to show us that a

¹. Philosophy, Vol.XXVIII, 1953

certain action will lead to, or deprive us of, another end which, when we notice it, we will feel to be an object of aversion or desire. That is to say, in the poisoned water example, it is only after reason has shown me the nature of the water which I propose to drink that I come to dislike it. Hume, Mabbott admits, does take account of this function of reason. In Book III of the Treatise, he points out that reason can influence our conduct in two ways, "either when it excites a passion by informing us of the existence of something which is a proper object of it - (this covers the poisoned water case)- or when it discovers the connexion of causes and effects so as to afford us means of exerting any passion." (This latter covers the ordinary case where we are initially moved to action by a passion). It may be said that the second of these two cases, nemely where an action is initially sparked off by a desire, fits Hume's statement that reason is the slave of the passions. It is, however, as Mabbott points ~~et~~ out, much more debatable as to whether Plato's case fits this description. As Mabbott says, "it is an odd slave who can 'excite' or generate his own masters, or prompt them and make them work when they would otherwise be fast asleep. In the Platonic example, but for the activity of reason, we should not have shunned the drink. Reason here is like a boxing promoter. Without his efforts, there would have been no contest; he produces one of the combatants, who would not without his aid ever have entered the ring."²

2. Mabbott, op.cit., p.II3

Nevertheless, one might argue that the position is really in Hume's favour, for though reason is certainly responsible for bringing the second desire into play, it does not actually constitute the moving force behind the action; and Hume would argue that unless the second desire had in fact been brought into operation in this way, reason in itself could have done nothing.

Mabbott realises the strength of Hume's position with regard to such cases, and he therefore goes on to consider other cases which he thinks directly contradict Hume's position. "Let us start with a simple example", he says, "I hear one o'clock strike. I feel hungry. What can reason do? It can tell me how to satisfy my hunger, by going home to lunch. What else? It may remind me that if I want a book which I can borrow from a colleague, I must catch him now; and I do want the book. Here, according to Hume, the work of reason is ended. The rest is a straight fight between my desire for food and my desire for the book, and the stronger will win. What in fact is likely to happen? I say to myself, 'Lunch can wait five minutes'. And I should probably say this even if hunger were the stronger desire of the two; that is, if the circumstances were such that I could not get the book without foregoing my lunch, and if in that case I should let the book go. The ordinary picture (Hume's picture) of a conflict of desires is like a boxing match in which both sides cannot win. What reason

does here is to ensure that both sides do win."^{3.}

On the face of it, this seems to be a more convincing example than Plato's; but in fact it might well be just as susceptible to Hume's analysis as Plato's was. What Mabbott is suggesting is that this is a case in which desire, namely the desire for food, is made to wait upon reason, or in which reason makes the desire wait. Yet surely this is possible only because the desire for the book is really very much stronger than the desire for food. Mabbott seems to be suggesting that the two desires are on a par, such that there is nothing to choose between them. Admittedly, he has inserted the clause that I can only get the book if I go now, as though to imply that it is really a rational consideration which makes me come down in favour of the book as opposed to the food; but in fact we might ~~equally~~ equally go along with Hume here and say merely that such a rational consideration has the effect of stimulating or emphasising my desire for the book. That I can only get it by going now makes the book more attractive to me than it would otherwise have been, makes me want it all the more; and thus I am prepared to postpone the satisfying of my hunger. It is surely evident that if I had been really hungry - if I had been suffering from the kind of hunger which results from going for days without food - the desire for the book would have exercised very ~~little~~ little influence upon me, and similarly the realisation that I can get the book only if

^{3.} Op.cit., p.II4

I go now would have been equally as ineffective.

We have seen that Mabbott says at the end of this particular passage: "The ordinary picture (Hume's picture) of a conflict of desires is like a boxing match in which both sides cannot win. What reason does here (meaning in his own case) is to ensure that both sides do win." But if he means to suggest that reason has an influence upon conduct in any way different from the way in which it has this influence in Plato's example, then this appears to be false. Reason merely has the function of telling me what I must do if I want the book; but the 'if' clause here makes it perfectly clear that the whole action is dependent upon whether I really want it or not. Reason does no less than this in the Platonic example, when it points out that the water is poisoned. As for Mabbott's statement that in the case he mentions the agent contrives to satisfy both desires, there would appear to be nothing in particular to distinguish this from the way in which we normally go about things. It is true that in submitting to his desire for the book, the agent is temporarily suppressing his desire for the food, but this is the case in all examples of conflict of desire: if we satisfy one, we cannot at the same time satisfy the other. Nevertheless, the other desire, especially if it is of the kind of which hunger is representative, will recur, and we cannot claim to have any significant control over this. It is in this respect misleading to suggest, as Mabbott does, that reason is somehow

responsible for postponing this desire. There are, of course, ways and means of 'suppressing' our desires, and as far as this goes it may be supposed that Mabbott's example is a good one. But it is still perhaps more accurate to say that the desires are suppressed, using this word in an objective fashion, than to say that we actually suppress them. There is no inner mental entity which, as it were, tells me not to satisfy my hunger immediately, in the example we were considering. This is suppressed for me by the existence of the other desire, whose strength is greater. It would be misleading, not to say false, to suppose that there was something over and above these desires, considered in themselves, which does the work of sorting them out, and informs me that it is right or convenient to fulfil one and not the other.

However, Mabbott extends his case even further. He says: "In the simple case I have considered, the two desires remain unaffected by the planning. I go to see my colleague and get the book. Meantime my hunger remains unabated (or increased) until in its turn it, too, is satisfied. But there are many ways in which planning results in altering the desires themselves, and the possibility of satisfying them. The desire whose satisfaction is postponed may diminish or disappear; and when this is known a time-plan may be used to weaken or destroy it. 'Count ten when you are angry'.... " ^{4.}

This suggestion, it seems to me, involves the same kind of mistake. If the statement 'Count ten when you are angry' is intended to act as a paradigm here, then it merely serves to illustrate that on those occasions when I am angry and am persuaded to count ten, I am really more concerned ~~/~~ not to appear angry, or not to appear angry and thereby offend a person whom, under normal circumstances, I very much like. One might give such conduct a rational air by saying that I adopt the general principle never again to display my anger in public; but of course the extent to which this principle is successful will depend very much upon how deeply I feel about it. Adopting the principle at all presupposes, if I adopt it honestly, that I have at least some desire to carry it out. But in fact there are circumstances in which I may be even more strongly committed to it - as a result, perhaps, of strong feelings of shame in the past for having become angry in public and having made a fool of myself. Thus all principles of this sort presuppose feelings of ~~one~~ sort or another, and it is these feelings, Hume maintains, which move me to action, or to refrain from action.

Mabbott makes a ~~similar-point~~ further point of a more or less similar nature: a time-plan "can eliminate the actual occurrence of a desire by the paradoxical nature of anticipating it. Civilized people in easy circumstances are seldom very hungry or thirsty; they do not eat and drink because they are

hungry or thirsty but because their time-plan prescribes it. Their regular meals stave off these desires.^{5.} But this is rather a peculiar way of arguing that reason is really in control of our desires. To anticipate desires in this way - and not only to anticipate them but also to cater for them by arranging meals at prescribed times - would seem to be the absolute paradigm of servility. This is precisely what a man would expect of his butler, or his valet, or his cook, namely, to anticipate his coming and to be prepared with his whisky, or his clothes, or his meal. Surely, in one all-important sense, the act of anticipating, together with the concept of 'catering for', is something which pre-eminently characterises the position of the servant; and this would apply as much to reason, considered as one of our mental capacities, as it would to people in themselves. If Mabbott insists on using metaphorical language, then this is the logical outcome.

There is one final point which we may briefly consider. A time-plan, Mabbott argues, "can check the operation of a desire by ensuring that, when the time comes for it to arise, it will not be possible or easy to satisfy it. If I want to reduce my smoking I put only a few cigarettes in my case before leaving home and keep none where I work; if I am suicidally inclined I give my gun to a friend to keep for me; if I go burgling I leave my gun at home, so that when I very much want to wing my

^{5.} Op.cit., p.II5

pursuer I shall not be able to do it."^{6.}

This point can again be met, so long as we confine ourselves to the Humean model. This is not simply a case in which I recognise that when under the influence of particular desires I am unable to control myself, and in which I make a rational decision to prevent the fulfilment of them, for example by leaving my gun behind, etc. - though no doubt this is how Mabbott would like us to see the situation. What it amounts to is that my desire not to bring about any harmful consequences either to myself (in the suicide case) or to others (in the burglar case) is much stronger than my desire for these other more dangerous ends. In fact, it is not even necessary to assume a conflict of desires here. The only desire at work is that for the prevention of harmful consequences; and the desire for these harmful consequences themselves arises only when I actually find myself in the relevant situations. Perhaps these are not called desires at all, but passions or impulses; but whatever the case, such situations are comfortably assimilated under the Humean model.

The proper conclusion at this point, therefore, should be that Mabbott's argument is unconvincing if it is conducted purely on Hume's terms. I shall now go on to consider the wider implications and presuppositions of Hume's position.

^{6.} Op/cit., p. II5

II

There has always been some tendency - and this was reinforced and perhaps perpetuated by Hume - to draw too rigid a dichotomy between what may be termed reasoned action and that kind of action which proceeds from wants, desires, and impulses. It is normally acknowledged that actions which emanate simply from wanting fall into two classes. Ross appears to have this in mind when he says: "It is sometimes said that I cannot act contrary to inclination, that I always do what I most want to do, even when the act seems contrary to inclination.... In this sense I always act from inclination. But the more usual meaning of 'acting from inclination' is doing what I enjoy doing, or else doing what I expect to produce enjoyment later; and it seems clear that we do not always do this."¹ What is not acknowledged, it would seem, is that there exists a kind of action which is not comfortably assimilated by either of these classes, and would perhaps be but grudgingly admitted to the class of purely rational actions. We might say that it stems from a ~~combination~~^{COMBINATION} of wanting, in a purely dispositional sense, with some rational consideration of a fairly specific nature. It is well illustrated by the man who, not having any particular intention or desire to travel abroad, is suddenly confronted with a Travel Agency, in the window of which is displayed an advertisement for continental holidays arranged under an easy-payment scheme; and who, in consequence,

¹. Sir David Ross: 'Kant's Ethical Theory', p.23

decides to make use of the opportunity. It would be false to say of this man that he originally wanted (in any ordinary sense of wanting) to go abroad, just as it would be false to suppose, if he were musically-minded, that he was wanting to listen to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, even though ~~th~~ he would, no doubt, readily accept an invitation to do so if it were offered to him. The kind of wanting involved in both these situations is evidently not of a positive kind. It is not as though the first man would have taken active steps towards arranging a trip abroad prior to noti~~x~~cing the advertisement; but it is true of him that he wanted this end in the sense that he would have given an affirmative answer to a question concerning his readiness to accept such an opportunity. Even this has to be qualified to some extent for if one asked him under normal circumstances whether or not he wanted to travel abroad, he might well deny that he wanted to on the ground that only under certain conditions would he be able to do so. The kind of reservations he will have in mind may be of a financial nature (which, of course, the knowledge of an easy-payment scheme may help to mitigate); they may be concerned with domestic considerations; or with anxiety about his job, and so on. In short, it is the kind of wanting which one would expect to be present in most men, at least with respect to certain fairly standardised ends, and despite the fact that the conditions attached to accepting opportunitⁱes for the

fulfilment of these ends will vary. There will, of course, be other ends which may be peculiar only to certain men, the desiring of which may be of the same negative, dispositional, nature. This is no more than to say that we are not all alike, that we must always allow for individual inclinations and preferences.

It would be wrong to equate wanting with wishing here. It is true that the kind of ends or goals involved are those towards which the agent, under normal conditions, takes no active steps, and it is true that we tend to distinguish the concept of wishing from that of wanting by saying that the former does not entail any action on the part of the agent, whereas the latter does. But if we assume, not without some justification, that wishing takes the form of idle day-dreaming, there is indeed little to suppose that what has been described as a dispositional sense of wanting can always be analysed along these lines. It may be true that the man who is persuaded into a course of action by the sight of the holiday advertisement has, in the past, often visualised such a holiday; but we do not necessarily have to suppose this in order to give sense to this sort of wanting. The only fundamental assumption involved would be that the agent was the type of man who would or does, as a matter of fact, enjoy continental holidays. Similarly, the man who would seize any opportunity of listening to a Beethoven symphony must be the sort of person who likes music, or the sort of person who likes

music by Beethoven in particular; but again we do not necessarily envisage him as a person who is periodically overcome by a burning desire or wish to listen to such music. To be precise about the point, we should say that neither wishing nor wanting are appropriate descriptions of this state of mind, since they both presuppose some kind of activity, whether this be mental or overt, on the part of the agent; whereas the mental state being considered is peculiar in presupposing neither.

Miss Anscombe appears - if I understand her correctly - to have isolated what approximates to a dispositional sense of wanting.² Having made a detailed reference to Aristotle's Practical Syllogism, she considers one or two candidates which might conceivably fall under the concept of wanting. Wishing, it would seem, is the weakest of these. There is also a wanting which is normally applied to the prick of desire at the thought or sight of an object, and, further, a kind of wanting which we would more usually call hoping. All these, she maintains, differ from the strong sense of wanting which "cannot be said to exist in a man who does nothing towards getting what he wants."³ The important thing to note is that this passage is intended to be a fairly exhaustive analysis. She has eliminated certain senses of wanting which she proposes to ignore as falling short of the paradigm in various ways. This being the

². See Intention, p.66

³. Op.cit., p.67

case, the interpretation we should put upon her treatment of the practical syllogism will be significantly different from that put upon it by D.P.Gauthier.⁴ Miss Anscombe attempts to persuade us that Aristotle's starting-point for the practical syllogism is the thing wanted. I take her to mean here that any practical syllogism presupposes a wanting in order for it to be a practical syllogism at all. What she denies, however, is that it presupposes it as a major premise. Wanting is indispensable in that "whatever is described in the proposition that is the starting-point of the argument must be wanted in order for the reasoning to lead to any action." Thus, she argues that the form 'I want a Jersey cow, they have good ones in the Hereford market, so I'll go there' is misconceived, and that it ought to be rendered 'They have Jersey cows in the Hereford market, so I'll go there'. Now it may well be false that all practical syllogisms can be rendered in this way. Gauthier seems to have seized upon just this point when he remarks that the above second rendering does not in fact specify the reason which links there being Jerseys in the Hereford market with my going there;⁵ and, as he points out, "a piece of practical reasoning provides an explanation and justification of an action, by setting out the agent's reason for acting." But it does seem as though Gauthier has missed the point of Miss Anscombe's earlier remarks.⁶ 'I want this, so I'll do it', she

⁴. Practical Reasoning, pp.28-29

⁵. Op.cit., p.29

⁶. Intention, p.65

thinks, is formally not a piece of practical reasoning at all. It is like 'I admire him so much, I shall sign the petition he is sponsoring', and this is obviously not a valid piece of reasoning, for there is no calculation involved. The second half of both statements is merely the expression, and not the acknowledgement of, the wanting and the admiring, respectively. One might, perhaps, put Miss Anscombe's point more succinctly by saying that since wanting is presupposed in order for practical reasoning to take place at all, it cannot therefore have a place in that reasoning. If I start with the statement 'I admire him' (the man whose petition I am eligible to sign), my reasoning will take the form '.... and the best way to express this will be to sign, so I shall sign...'. Thus Miss Anscombe is led to say: "We must always remember that an object is not what what is aimed at is; the description under which it is aimed at is that under which it is called the object." Consequently, my aim would not be to sign the petition but rather to sign the petition as being the best way of expressing my admiration.

Now it is clear from these remarks that the type of wanting being discussed is that which most nearly corresponds to a dispositional analysis and which, as I have already hinted, requires a rational consideration for fulfilment. Thus my liking for Jersey cows (my more or less permanent tendency to say 'yes' to anyone who offers me some, granted certain other

conditions) is not something I am likely to act upon in the normal course of events; but my realisation that there are some for sale in the Hereford market may lead me to travel there, just as my noticing the advertisement in the travel-agency window leads me to take steps towards a continental holiday. Gauthier is certainly right in thinking that these cases do not represent the way in which wants are normally fulfilled, but he is wrong to suppose that the very presence of a gap (constituted for him by the absence of the initial statement of a want which would have comprised the major premise) "is conclusive ground to object that the argument is not properly set out."⁷ For these are cases in which the argument cannot get going, as it were, until some reflection has taken place. It is precisely this feature of dispositional wanting which Miss Anscombe^m has isolated. She has done so inadvertently, of course, for, as we have seen, she was primarily concerned with a strong sense of wanting; and I would agree with Gauthier that where it is true to say that a person has, for some time - to take the paradigm case of wanting - had a burning desire for some object, it would be odd to deny that this forms part of the practical reasoning involved. If we say of someone that he wants, in a positive sense, to buy a Jersey cow, then to summarise the practical reasoning involved in his achieving this goal as 'There are Jersey cows in the Hereford market; I'll go there' does indeed seem to leave a gap. It is rather as though

⁷ Practical Reasoning, p.29

one overhears only the tail-end of a piece of conversation. Miss Anscombe has clearly failed to distinguish between these two kinds of wanting. Her argument applies, if we confine it in its relation to the practical syllogism, only to the dispositional kind.

Yet her contention is not wholly misguided with respect to the stronger sense. One might maintain that all desires remain dormant until the incidence of an appropriate occasion for fulfilment, and that in this sense they are dependent upon a realisation which, put formally, is the proposition that this is an appropriate occasion. That signing the petition which this man has sponsored is an appropriate expression of my admiration for him would be some such proposition. It might then be argued that since the wanting in itself was not sufficient to bring about the action, and that since it required a synthesis of this plus the realisation that signing the petition was an appropriate means of doing it, we cannot therefore insert the wanting alone as a premise in the practical syllogism. This is what Miss Anscombe has in mind when she says that 'I admire... and the best way to express this will be to sign, so I shall sign' is a piece of reasoning or calculating, while 'I admire... so I shall sign' is not.

But what Miss Anscombe does not appear to realise is that the wanting involved in this case represents a definitive mental step, as it were, a state of mind which finds expression

in a number of ways. The situation is not now adequately represented by the person who would give an affirmative answer to a question concerning his desire to go abroad. If this represents a state of mind at all, it is an entirely negative one. He is now the sort of person who will tend to make his desire known, and whose desire may constitute the subject of another's conversation. He will visit travel-agencies purposefully; he will inspect his bank account, or borrow money; he will talk about various possibilities, and so on. It is in this sense that his wanting signifies an event in the world, something to which we should afford ontological status; and it is for this reason, if for no other, that this event deserves a place in the practical syllogism. It is because a dispositional kind of wanting does not share these properties that it deserves to be excluded.

I am not, however, primarily concerned with the form of the practical syllogism, as such, but rather with the general implications of admitting that there exists a species of wanting which is not characterizable in terms of emotion, feeling, and positive expression. For this is the admission which may well entail the revision of the Humean conception which we considered in Part I of the present chapter - the conception of the underlying motivating factor for all action as being essentially emotional. That Hume clearly held this

view is obvious from his remarks in the section of the Treatise entitled 'Of the Influencing Motives of the Will'. Such motives he terms 'passions'. What he is normally taken to have in mind under this description are feelings such as hope, fear, grief, joy, despair, etc; but the class of desires falls under this head as well. Thus he says, speaking of the supposed opposition between passion and reason: "The moment we perceive the falsehood of any supposition, or the insufficiency of any means, our passions yield to our reason without any opposition. I may desire any fruit as of an excellent relish; but whenever you convince me of my mistake, my longing ceases."⁸ It is also clear from the same quotation that he thinks of a desire as being an internal mental occurrence. As A.I.Melden points out, a desire for Hume "functions as a cause, usually sparking in some way an item of co-called overt behaviour."⁹ He maintains further that "since a desire is a desire for something, this occurrence is held to be directed in some way at an object or event, the obtainment of which is the 'satisfaction' of the desire... " Whether this latter point is strictly true with respect to Hume in particular, even though Melden claims to be using Hume's terminology, is more questionable; for Hume does make an explicit distinction, within the same section, between the passions proper and certain "calm desires and tendencies" which, though he admits to be 'real passions', nevertheless

⁸. Treatise, Bk.II, Part III, Section III

⁹. A.I.Melden: 'Free Action', p.108

produce "little emotion in the mind, and are more known by their effects than by the immediate feeling or sensation." As examples of these calmer desires, he mentions benevolence and resentment, the love of life, and kindness to children, in addition to 'the general appetite to good and aversion to evil. His acknowledgement of this distinction, and the examples he chooses to illustrate it, would seem to indicate also his acknowledgement that not all desires are directed in any positive sense to some object or event. Love of life in particular does not have any obvious directional character. But it is perhaps more plausible to support Melden's second remark by pointing out that Hume may well be thinking in terms of the episodic occurrence of these emotions. It is an argument against this interpretation that such occurrences would, by virtue of being episodic, tend to be of a more violent nature than Hume could have intended, but there is no reason to suppose that Hume actually foresaw such a possibility; and, episodic or not, it is certainly true that he saw no incompatibility between their being calm and their being active. Despite their ~~el~~ calmness, he maintains that they are 'real passions'; and it is not the case that they produce no emotion, but that they produce 'little emotion'.^{10.} The important thing, then, is that the existence of desires does represent a mental occurrence of some sort for Hume, whether it be of an episodic

^{10.} See Bk.II, Part III, Section III

nature or not: they are longings, feelings, or emotions.

But granted that passions such as hope, fear, grief, and joy, in addition to desires in general, exhaust the possible candidates for human motivation - and certainly Hume seems to assume this - then we are still faced with the problem of accounting for the rôle of practical reasoning when it is conjoined with nothing more than a dispositional wanting. (Let it be admitted that 'wanting' is perhaps not the right word to describe what is essentially a tendency to make an affirmative response to appropriate opportunities for the fulfilment of certain ends not previously desired. This would follow upon the traditional definition of wanting as a primitive 'trying to get', as Miss Anscombe terms it.¹¹ Nevertheless, there remains this fact, a facet of human nature sufficiently universal to warrant careful treatment; and a facet which differs from Hume's calm passions precisely in its being devoid of emotional content, precisely because the phrases 'mental occurrence' and 'mental activity' are inapplicable to it.)

One could make out a case for saying that Hume was vaguely aware of the difficulty which the conception of rational or reflective motivation presented for his official view - though this would have to be regarded as little more than a hypothesis, largely ungrounded. Thus in the section on 'Justice, Whether a Natural or Artificial Virtue', he says "'Tis requisite.... to

¹¹. Intention, p.67

find some motives to acts of justice and honesty, distinct from our regard to the honesty; and in this lies the great difficulty." Now admittedly, the difficulty he mentions is not genuinely his own difficulty. He means to imply, no doubt, that the difficulty of providing motives to acts of justice supports his own general thesis at this point, namely that we have no natural tendency to be just. (In the Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, the non-natural aspect of just acts is emphasised by contrasting it with our natural - in the sense of 'immediate' - tendency to be benevolent).

Nevertheless, we know that Hume had already committed himself to the view that motivation is essentially an activity, an occurrence, which he describes as a passion, whether this be violent or calm. It denotes the presence of a mental something to spark off action. Now if one cared to emphasise this conception of motives, the notion of just acts (as being pre-eminently representative of the class of reflective or rational motives) would now seem to constitute a genuine difficulty. It is true that this and subsequent sections provide a tentative solution to the problem; but what one needs to ask, on the present hypothesis, is why Hume thought that the class of just acts in particular required separate treatment. May it not have been that he saw them as a challenge to his official view of motivation?

At one point, Hume asks, rhetorically, whether the sense

of morality or duty may not produce an action, without any other motive.^{12.} He admits that it may, but maintains that this is no objection to his position because it nevertheless presupposes some principle or motive common to human nature apart from this. But we may care to ask why it should have been considered a possible difficulty in the first place. Could it have been because it represented a non-emotional spring to action, when he has already given an account of motivating factors as being predominantly passion-like?

His positive account of just acts takes the form of a quasi-historical ~~account~~ explanation, namely that "'tis only from the selfishness and confin'd generosity of men, along with the scanty provision nature has made for his wants, that justice derives its origin."^{13.} But it is hard to see what function he sees this explanation as performing. It may well constitute a very general explanation of just acts considered as a class, or of the system of justice considered in its entirety. But it does not explain - in the sense of providing the particular motivating factor for - actions in the concrete, and it was surely these actions to which he was referring in the section on 'The Influencing Motives of the Will', considered earlier.

The fact seems to be that having given an exhaustive account of motives in terms of emotional factors, he is now

^{12.} Treatise, Bk.III, Part II, Section I

^{13.} Treatise, Bk.III, Part II, Section II

blind to the possibility of there being motives non-characterizable in these terms, and thus the peculiar search for a causal explanation of a generic nature but with strong emotional content, viz selfishness. He might have argued 'resorted to an explanation in terms of simple desires, to be analysed in this context as sentiments of approval for just acts. That he does not do so is perhaps indicative of his awareness that they do not sufficiently simulate passions in either of the senses he mentions. The desire to be just is not, after all, something which greatly disturbs one's emotional set-up: it is just not that kind of desire, and this was perhaps the beginning of Hume's difficulty.

Furthermore, having stated that justice has its origin in the selfishness and confined generosity of men, he draws as one of his conclusions that the sense of justice is not founded upon reason; yet this is in no way entailed - as he seems to think it is - by the previous statement. The origin of a system, of a way of living, or of a framework of attitudes, need have no bearing whatsoever upon the subsequent motivational pattern of those who conform to it. If Hume's sections on Justice are intended to accommodate just acts within his official view of motivation - and this in itself would tend to suggest ~~that~~ his suspicion that they are not readily accommodated - then they fail to do so. His conclusion is to some extent forestalled in Section I, where he admits that

"we have no real or universal motive for observing the laws of equity, but the very equity and merit of that observance." The truth is that there is no real motive because there is no universal motive; for 'universal' in this context means for Hume what is part of human nature as such, a natural propensity like benevolence; above all, something which can be regarded as a passion, and thus as constituting a potential mental occurrence.

However, whether these passages are evidence for the view that Hume found some difficulty in the ~~view~~ notion of rational or reflective motivation is not of ~~any~~ ^{any} great importance. What is important is that he sees wants or desires as impulses to action, hunger, thirst, sexual desire, pain, anger, etc. falling neatly into this category. His thesis is stretched to accommodate wants which are conscious and reflective. As Gauthier says: "If I want to make a tour of Cornwall, then I consider when I may be able to make it, when it may fit into my other activities, and how I might be able to afford it, how it might fit into my other expenses. If I am able to make it fit without interfering with the fulfilment of greater wants, I plan to make the tour."¹⁴ He goes on to say: "I am not now impelled to set out for Cornwall; but I include the want in determining what I shall do." It is in this kind of situation that the notion of

¹⁴. Practical Reasoning, pp.38-39

'passions', and even 'calm passions', comes to seem inappropriate. The inappropriateness is accentuated when one considers the notion of dispositional wanting with which this chapter has been primarily concerned. Gauthier makes allowance for wants which closely resemble this, though he describes them as 'future wants'. "To determine what one ought to do", he says, "one must consider all relevant factors, and not just those relevant at or to a given moment. Thus it is necessary to employ premises concerning what is desirable to the agent, without regard for time, and the practical basis must consist, not only of present, occurrent wants, but also of wants which may be occurrent at some future time."^{15.} He continues: "I cannot, obviously, allow for all possible future wants in determining what I should do; but I can make limited provision for them. I can know some of the activities in which I may likely want to engage at some future time, and hence endeavour not to make it impossible for me to engage in them. I can keep in touch with professors of other universities, in case I should require employment.... " It is of course tempting to suppose that if one is going to make allowances for future wants in this way, this presupposes a certain degree of occurrent wanting. Perhaps it often does; but it may equally stem from a prediction based upon an unbiased act of self-observation - 'Being the sort of person I am I shall very likely

^{15.} Op.cit., p.39

want to make use of an opportunity of this kind in years to come, though, of course, I have no inclination to do so now'.

Admittedly, Gauthier's account of future wants differs in one important respect from that which has been advanced in the present chapter. He seems to envisage the kind of wanting which simply occurs and is not dependent upon a 'rationalization' concerning some state of affairs. Nevertheless, they both have this in common, namely, that the actualization of the want is preceded by a state of dormant or dispositional acquiescence ~~in-the-second-case~~ conditional upon outward circumstances in the second case, and inward in the first.

The broader implications of admitting the existence of such passive wants are only too obvious. It will necessarily have some bearing upon the traditional distinction between reason and sentiment, as applied to action. The traditional view, stemming from Aristotle, and more positively confirmed by Hume, is that 'Intellect itself.... moves nothing'. Reason is conceived as that which contemplates or discovers matters of fact or the relations of ideas; something which is, by definition, inert and powerless in the face of certain causal factors, like desires, whose fulfilment it may direct but not dictate. It is this sterile conception of reason which, according to Melden,^{16.} is responsible for the idea that desires

^{16.} See 'Free Action', Chs X,XI.

are internal mental occurrences which produce movements. Perhaps this is true if one can assume that those who embrace this view begin from such a definition. Ostensibly, Hume's treatment of the topic is not quite as naive. Though the function of reason is similarly defined, it is at least intended to be the end-product of an empirical analysis into the motives of both moral judgements in particular and actions in general. In the light of the remarks already made upon this, it might be more accurate to point out that this conception of reason really stems from an analysis which fails by virtue of its inadequacy. It might be said that it is not sufficiently empirical to take account of the complexity of human wanting. But it might also be argued that, since he implicitly acknowledged the difficulty of accommodating calm passions - and more particularly absentee passions - under his official view of motivation, it was more properly a case of fitting his analysis to a pre-conceived notion of the function of reason.

But it is the conclusion itself and not - except indirectly - the arguments leading up to it which is being called in question. One has to endorse Mabbott's comment here - though giving it a different reference - and point out that it is misleading, to say the least, to regard reason as a mere observer of happenings in cases where only by its operation can action ensue. These are not cases where, with a pre-conceived desire for some end, one employs (to put it naively)

one's reason in order to secure the end in question. Even here it would perhaps be false to deny some practical content to reason; but one would have to agree with Hume in asserting that the end and thus the action which is a means to it is in one important sense determined independently of reason. Rather, it is false to speak of pre-conceived desires at all, and we have already observed that the notion of wanting itself is misleading if this is meant to refer to inner mental feelings, and the like. The agent is not on the look-out for opportunities for getting what he wants, simply because his wanting is not of this kind: it is more properly expressed as a sort of character-judgement in terms of likes and dislikes. Given the right opportunity in the right circumstances we want to say of him that he will most probably do so-and-so. Mrs Rachael Kydd,¹⁷ though she refers to a stronger sense of wanting, puts a similar point by saying that these are cases where a synthesis of two kinds of judgement is necessary for the execution of the action. Thus, using her¹ suggestion, we might say that the Land Surveyor in Kafka's 'The Castle' has a positive desire - backed up by a good reason - to enter the Castle by the bureaucracy of which he is officially employed. But entry to the Castle is effected only by intricate and devious methods, and he is thus obliged to wait upon an appropriate opportunity. It is his recognition that the minor bureaucrat, Klammm, constitutes such, together with his

¹⁷. R.M.Kydd: 'Reason and Conduct in Hume's Treatise'

acknowledgement of his own desire to effect entry, which ultimately brings about action on his part. This is presumably the kind of synthesis which Mrs Kydd has in mind. But of course such synthesis can obviously take place lower on the scale of wanting. We might suppose, for example, that Kafka's Land Surveyor is the kind of person who would want to get married, that he is the type of person who would, all other conditions being equal, appreciate the attentions of a woman. Now granted this supposition, we need only a rational consideration of the kind which Kafka at one point suggests, namely, that ~~Fieda~~ Frieda, by virtue of her acquaintance with Klammm, might well constitute the bridge which would afford access to the latter, and thus to the Castle. It is his appreciation of the circumstances, his seeing them not simply as a ne~~u~~tral set of circumstances but as an appropriate means of justifying an end to which he was previously disposed by nature, that is primarily responsible for any action he may take.

It might be supposed that the process of coming to want something as a result of a rational consideration is in most important respects a similar one, and yet, so it may be argued, we have no tendency to give reason any ascendancy here. Why, therefore, think that the previous case is any different? The difference is, however, greater than might be supposed. If, by the use of my reason, I judge a certain course of action to be both attractive and within my power and that it happens to fit

in with any other intentions I may have, etc., this may well set up in me a positive desire to act. But then this is clearly a case in which the functioning of reason and the existence of a desire are temporally distinguishable. The desire is consequent upon the reasoning, and indeed might not have occurred at all. It is in this sense that we want to say that any action which might conceivably follow must be dependent upon the desiring: it is in this sense that reason is essentially inert. But the kind of case which I have been concerned to discuss is that which involves a simultaneous awareness of one's wanting, on the one hand, and of this being a means of fulfilling it on the other. Reason is not succeeded by, nor indeed, as I have tried to argue, preceded by, desire. Only if it were, would it seem plausible to maintain that our actions are determined by our desires.

But this is only one version - and perhaps a crude version - of the notion of synthesis. It also has a far more general application which brings out more clearly the inadequacies of the Humean position. This is a synthesis which philosophers either ignore or fail to see. Wanting or desiring is not naturally divorced from rational activity, as Hume would have us think, except in certain special cases. These special cases are those in which desires or wants are essentially non-rational. Hunger, thirst, sexual desire, pain, anger, etc. are

of this kind. They tend to impel¹⁸ us to action, to act as a determining influence independently of rational considerations; and we normally distinguish them from reflective wanting by calling them impulses. We look upon them as having little or no relation to the desirability of the object at which they are directed, and indeed this very fact constitutes a potential exculpating factor in certain situations. Gauthier's example is instructive here: "We are standing near the edge of a cliff; on a sudden impulse I endeavour to push you over. Here, I try to do something, to bring about a certain ~~situation~~ situation, but, if I succeed, need I achieve what I want? Surely if I state that I wanted to push you over the cliff, and even more if I state that I pushed you over because I wanted to, I believe the claim that I acted upon impulse. To have acted upon impulse, although quite unjustifiable in this instance, is at least a partial defense against the accusations that are sure to be levelled against me, but to have acted because I wanted to provides no defense at all."¹⁸ The thing about impulses of this kind is that reflection upon them may often result in their rejection as being distinctly undesirable. For this reason, we are led to say that we did not really want to do what in fact we did, that had we considered, we would not have done it. This is undoubtedly what has caused many philosophers to argue that wanting, in a human context, involves knowing what one wants.

¹⁸. Practical Reasoning, pp.36-37

Now if we exclude such impulsions, we are left with wants which are reflective in character. But to say this is above all to say that wanting is itself a rational activity. To be aware of one's desires is to know how to characterise them. The bonds between desires and the ends to which they are directed is not a causal one but a logical one. If one dwells upon the reflective aspect of wanting, this is surely a conclusion which one must necessarily draw. If desires were isolated mental entities having some kind of causal power to bring actions into being, then there would be no reason to suppose that we could be in a position to determine the end from a mere consideration of the desire itself. Yet in fact we do claim to be able to do this. It is of the nature of desire that it is a desire to do something. There may be doubt about the appropriate description of the end envisaged; there may be difficulty in stating it; but it must be in principle describable, in principle statable. But the capacity to describe the end is something peculiar to rational agents, as such. It involves a conception of the end, very much in the way that acting morally for Kant entails being aware of the principle for the sake of which one acts. To act merely in accordance with a principle is something of which animals and non-rational or sub-rational creatures are capable. This is to admit no more than that the conduct involved is subject to, or governed by, certain rules which have a function similar to that of laws of nature. Such conduct corresponds to those human

actions which stem from impulses and where, for the most part, there is no conception of the end. It is for this reason that the word 'desire' does not adequately describe the state of mind preceding the action; for it is false to suppose that any particular state of affairs was envisaged as being the result of the action. It is perhaps more accurate to say in these cases that a certain state of mind is satiated in the way in which the natural requirements of the body may be satiated.

But under normal circumstances, the fulfilment of wants or desires entails the handling of objects which are already familiar to us. We operate with objects whose description has been previously determined, and whose place in our environment we know if only by their relation to other objects similarly defined and similarly located. And in many cases, the means to desired ends are also familiar, again by their being located in relation to these ends, and also by their having been potential ends themselves. Of course, it is true that we cannot always know what the means are, and, on the face of it, this looks like a case in which an existing desire has to wait upon the operation of reason as its tool before it can be fulfilled. This in turn seems to square with the traditional view of desires as being the ultimate cause and determinant of action, and of the use of reason as being an operation temporally succeeding it. But it has to be remembered that ^{THE} wanting originally coincides with a conception of the end, a potential description of it. It

is not as though we are continuously moving around in a world the constituents of which are alien to us, and whose properties and relations we have to learn. This is surely what would be involved in becoming rational beings, in becoming adult; and if our experience were always of this sort, if objects were constantly alien to our perception, the very notion of rationality would come to lose its meaning. Moreover, only under such conditions could we plausibly imagine reason as being solely engaged in contemplating objects preparatory to recognising or picking out truths about them, the whole process succeeding the initial wanting. In fact, our experience is not of this sort. It has to be stressed that, as sophisticated human beings, we are familiar with our surroundings, with objects and the ~~relation~~ relation between them, with people and the relations between them. There is a constant synthesis between this knowing (this possession of concepts) and our wanting. In one all-important sense, we cannot want anything at all - where this means reflective wanting - unless we are able to conceive of the ends which would fulfil them. "Thus", says Miss Anscombe, "it is not mere movement or stretching out towards something, but this on the part of a creature that can be said to know the thing."¹⁹ She supports her statement with an analogy which illustrates its converse, namely, that knowledge itself cannot be described independently of volition. She points out that one of the tenets of phenomenism has always been that e.g. coming

¹⁹. Intention, p.67

to know the meaning of colour-words "is only a matter of picking out and naming certain perceived differences and similarities between objects." She continues: "But e.g. the identification served by colour-names is in fact not primarily that of colours, but of objects by means of colours; and thus, too, the prime mark of colour-discrimination is doing things with objects - fetching them, carrying them, placing them - according to their colours. Thus the possession of sensible discrimination and that of volition are inseparable; one cannot describe a creature as having the power of sensation without also describing it as doing things in accordance with perceived sensible differences."^{20.} This last is perhaps not the legitimate inference she takes it to be, but her analogy does indicate fairly well the kind of synthesis which has been mentioned in the forgoing pages. Melden puts the same point more clearly: "It is not.... that an agent experiences one event - the itch or twitch of desire - and another- the experience of objects whose qualities or relations he contemplates..... What we need to do, therefore, is to recover our sense of the character of our experience of and our thinking about the things we want, because we want them. But here the 'because' marks not the occurrence of an event that produces such experiences and thinking, but rather their character."^{21.}

Thus again we might place our own interpretation upon

^{20.} Op.cit., p.67

^{21.} 'Free Action', p.164

the activities of Kafka's Land Surveyor, and suppose that he sees his prospective wife as a means of reaching Klamm, and thence as a means of entry to the Castle. There are many other descriptions which would have applied equally to Frieda. She is, first and foremost, a woman; but she is also a barmaid whose position is influential; she is also a protégée of the Castle official, Klamm; and she is, finally, a suitable potential wife. Above all, however, the Land Surveyor sees her as an influential barmaid. What he wants, namely entry to the Castle, colours his thinking about the things immediately related to it, determines the kind of description he will be disposed to give of the means to the desired end. Wanting permeates our thinking, and reason permeates our wanting, in a way which altogether excludes the traditional notion of desires as causal passions, as mental occurrences. Reverting to Miss Anscombe's remark, "we must always remember that an object is not what what is aimed at is; the description under which it is aimed at is that under which it is called the object."^{22.}

It will be noted that Miss Anscombe seems to presuppose that there will always be some description which allows us to say what the object 'is', and in a sense this is correctly presupposed. That is to say, certain descriptions have to be agreed upon, originally, in order for a language to get going. A university, for example, is essentially an educational

^{22.} Op.cit.

establishment, a library a place where books may be stored, borrowed, or read. These are the meanings we are taught during the course of learning a language; they have to be presupposed if communication is to be possible at all. But over and above such definitions, we may come, for various reasons, to impose further descriptive content, usually of a 'personal' nature. Thus a university may be primarily the place where one met one's wife, a library the place where one takes one's midday nap, and so on. Superimposed descriptions of this sort indicate a sophistication in the activity of rational beings; but the underlying condition of such activity is the existence of standard descriptions which themselves have to be learned. It is in the learning of then that we become rational agents having the capacity to conceptualise. This capacity in its turn is the precondition of all wanting, in the strong sense. Not ~~et~~ to be able to describe what one wants - where this excludes contingent difficulties of expression or formulation - indicates a purely animal impulsion to action where the notion of intention in particular becomes inapplicable. A fully rational being, then, is a being who has mastered a language and who knows how to communicate; and he thus operates with objects which have a certain description. It is not as though all his dealings are with objects in themselves, as it were, upon which he employs his reason to fit the appropriate description when the occasion arises. One

identifies an object as a so-and-so, and if it were not identifiable in this way, if it were not possible to characterise it with at least some descriptive term, it would be very hard to see how one could ever come to want it. One cannot want what is in principle indescribable. There must always be some kind of answer to the question 'What do you want?', given that the person wants something. Robin Savage, in John Masters' novel 'The Lotus and the Wind', is portrayed as seeking something which is said to be indescribable. Admittedly, he is constantly in the position of not knowing what answer to give to the above question. The goals which he does in fact achieve are merely stepping stones to something over and beyond them; but it would be false to suppose that the final goal remains completely unconceptualised; for he is able to recognise the things which the obtainment of this goal would effectively eliminate, namely, his introvertive tendencies, his isolationism - these being the things which now stand in the way of a congenial relationship with his wife.

Similarly, one makes a further identification of an object in the light of ~~one~~ what one wants at any given time. A mountaineer sees Cader Idris not simply as a mountain whose designation is such by virtue of its fulfilling certain requirements, but rather as a challenge to his own climbing ability. A Lincolnshire farmer sees the Hereford market not simply as a place where cattle are bought and sold, but as a

place from which he can purchase Jersey cows. In all these cases, wanting enters in to the way in which we think about the ends. It determines the kind of description we would give, if asked at the time of our wanting. In one important sense, wanting is transparently obvious from the very description we give of an object. The description constitutes one aspect of the doing, the 'trying to get', which is logically tied to wanting. King Charles sees the oak-tree as a temporary refuge from the Parliamentary forces. His seeing as such itself indicates his wanting to conceal his whereabouts. The mountaineer sees the peak not simply as a peak, but as a challenge to his prowess - because he wants to climb it. The ability to ~~give~~ give a description in terms of one's wanting is of course a fairly sophisticated performance, but it nevertheless reflects what happens at the basic, unsophisticated level of animals and young children where, as Melden says, a cat "sees a bird as something to be eaten", where a beast "understands a trap only as something which prevents it from doing what it wants to do", and where an infant sees a rattle, "not as a plastic toy... but as a shiny thing to be put in its mouth."²³ (The notion of 'seeing as' perhaps sounds a little inappropriate here, but it is nevertheless an effective means of shedding light upon these cases). In animals, this is the natural expression of an intention, of a desire. The act of withholding, of abstaining,

²³. Free Action, p.169

of changing one's mind, is something which characterises more rational beings; but nevertheless the doing, or the first steps towards it, are already expressed in the description I tend to give of the end, or of the means to it.

There is one further point which will be of relevance to the present chapter. I have so far been talking firstly about that kind of wanting which is devoid of emotional content and whose fulfilment requires a rational consideration; and secondly about a stronger sense of wanting which falls into Hume's conception of desires as internal passions. Of the first I argued that it would be misleading, to say the least, to regard the wanting involved as the prime motivating factor, and indeed that it would be no motivating factor at all if motives were regarded as 'driving forces'. It was further argued that a synthesis of my disposition to acquiesce, with the realisation that a certain situation constituted a unique opportunity of fulfilling my want, was necessary in order for action to ensue. I then went on to consider the stronger sense of wanting in which the agent is actively seeking a means of fulfilment. I argued that, even here, the model of a want as an internal mental occurrence, and of reason as an inert spectator supervising or directing, but not dictating, was thoroughly misleading; that, on the contrary, wanting is logically dependent upon reason in the very ability to

conceptualise.

Now there are certain situation in which the wants of others enter into our practical reasoning, and it is normally assumed that here too the motivating factor must be of an emotional kind. Hume himself explains actions resulting from such reasoning as being due to a natural sentiment of benevolence (if we confine ourselves to the Enquiry), this in its turn being one of the passions which alone make action possible. It is not, however, entirely clear that such an explanation withstands a close analysis of the practical reasoning involved. A farmer, for example, might be asked why he has decided to plough the fields on the west side of his land instead of those on the east, as he is accustomed to do, and he might justify his action by referring to the fact that the lands on the eastern side happen to adjoin the estate of a local magnate whose house overlooks the relevant fields and who happens at the moment to be seriously ill: the continued noise of a tractor might impede his recovery. Thus it might be said that the justification takes the form of a reference^e to another's want.

Now it would admittedly be possible to press the farmer upon this point and stress that the likes and dislikes of the neighbour and his family really have no bearing upon what fields he ought and what fields he ought not to plough. The farmer may retort that if the man and his family are to be

disquieted by his continued ploughing, then he ought not to do so. He might well appeal to the commonly acknowledged fact that one ought not to contribute unnecessarily to existing suffering. His position can be legitimately summarised as 'He does not want to cause unnecessary hardship'. The real point at issue is that such a summary amounts to no more than a denial that he wants to cause such hardship: it does not, as Hume would presumably think, assert that he wants not to do this.²⁴ It is true that, usually, when we say that we do not want to do something, we mean that we have a positive desire not to do it; but clearly this is not always the case. It may be - and the present case is intended to indicate just this - that all one is concerned to do is to deny that one has any positive desire to do the action in question; that what one wants to convey is that one has no feelings either way. The correct answer to the question 'Do you want to read Gitanjali, by Rabindranath Tagore?' would, in a relatively uncultured context, be fairly obviously in the negative for any given person, but it might be false to suppose that he wanted not to read it. He is merely denying that he had any specific intention of doing this, denying perhaps that he had considered the matter. It may be that he had been aware of the possibility of doing so at some time or other, just as in our first example the man was alive to the general possibility of a continental holiday, given the existence of favourable

²⁴. I owe this general point to Gauthier. See Practical Reasoning, Chapter VI.

conditions; but, as we have already observed, it would perhaps be misleading to regard this as wanting - except for the purpose of illustrating certain philosophical points. Without the relevant conditions, he does nothing towards the obtainment of his goal. But it would be false, for the same reasons, to assert that he did not want to go abroad; and if one asked him if he wanted to, making it clear to him that one means does he have any intention of, or any anxiety about, going, he would obviously give a negative answer without also wishing to assert that he did not want to go - without, that is, wishing to indicate that he had closed his mind to the possibility.

Yet, even if one excludes this case on the ground that dispositional acquiescence sometimes, for some purposes, counts as wanting, there still remain those many cases where complete absence of consideration for the end ensures the absence of any kind of wanting on the part of the agent. And here we still wish to say that his denial was not based upon a desire not to do the thing in question. It is indeed a well-known fact that a person is often induced to pursue a certain end merely by having been provoked into denying that he was positively interested. The denial in itself brings the matter before his mind.

Of course, ~~en-e~~ one may counter the examples which have so far been considered by setting particular acquiescence against a more general tendency to do things of a certain class. Thus

one may say that the person who denies that he wants to read Tagore is nevertheless the kind of person who is disposed to increase his knowledge or to broaden his cultural outlook. The explanation would therefore be that he denies that he also wants not to read Tagore on the ground that to do so would be part of what is meant by broadening one's cultural outlook, and this is certainly something he does want. Therefore, it is not true after all to say that the agent has no feelings either way.

This would be a tenuous line of argument.^{25.} It is one thing to list the kind of tendencies, inclinations, likes, dislikes, etc. which a person has. It is quite another to assert the agent's awareness of these in his actions and abstentions from action. Of course it is true that a person may set out to broaden his cultural outlook as from a given time, and it will then be natural for him to see certain actions as falling under this general intention. He may explicitly acknowledge the fact, and act upon this acknowledgement. But again, it is not necessary that he should consciously have set himself this objective. And if he has not done so, then we should want to say that it was merely accidental that the activities in which he happens to engage have the effect of advancing his cultural knowledge. He happens to enjoy doing these things, or, more accurately, has no particular objections either way. In such

^{25.} See Chapter I, pp.22-23.

circumstances, one cannot rightly infer that he has any desire to read Tagore, if only because there is no acknowledged intention to ~~en~~ enlarge his cultural position, and therefore he does not and cannot see the present activity as being a means to that end.

But the more important consideration in this matter is not whether certain feelings are entailed by an analysis of the situation, but rather the fact that the agent repudiates any positive desire not to do what he says he ~~de~~ will not do. The agent himself makes it clear that this is not the usual situation in which one says that one does not want, meaning that one has a reason for not wanting: his explanation is designed to show that there are no feelings involved either way.

At the beginning of this chapter, I remarked that the traditional dichotomy between reason and sentiment was too rigid. What followed was an attempt to bear out the truth of this statement. It is hoped that in isolating two senses of wanting which are not satisfactorily assimilated under the Humean model of the motive as a causal passion, and by applying a more realistic analysis of the function of wanting and reasoning in human action, this model has been to some extent dispelled.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

There is nothing which can be regarded as the conclusion of a work of this kind, especially if this word refers to some one 'positive' result. But it is hoped that a certain purpose has been achieved. This is the purpose which was stated in the Introduction, and which consists in the attempt to emphasise the complexity of the concept of motivation in its widest sense. In its turn, this should serve to inhibit the philosopher's natural tendency to assimilate the concept under a single model.

Conceptual regimentation perhaps constitutes both the merit and the handicap of a linguistic philosopher. It is a merit in that, if we take it for granted that conceptual clarification is a good thing, such activity is particularly conducive to that end: it is a handicap in that the desire to clarify often so dominates the procedure as to render the philosopher blind to what may be fine, but nevertheless important, linguistic distinctions.

I am perhaps being deceived in claiming to have disengaged myself from both these pursuits; but then, in one important sense, the work would lose much of its meaning if such a claim were not recorded. It may be justified on two general grounds. These are, firstly, that philosophical regimentation is the one thing against which each chapter has explicitly argued; and, secondly,

that far from being blind to certain distinctions, linguistic or otherwise, the revelation of them has, I hope, been rife. It may be argued that the activity to which this was an alternative is therefore preferable, for the present pursuit merely serves to accentuate an already existing confusion. But then to express confusion is often to express an inability to control or understand the facts; and this, it seems to me, is not a good reason for concealing some of them. The present treatment of the forces governing human behaviour does indeed render the facts more complex, and perhaps more complicated, merely by virtue of increasing their number; but it has also, one may hope, contributed something to our knowledge in this field. Any confusion to which it may give rise cannot properly be regarded as my concern.

It hardly needs saying that the discussion could have branched out into many more fields, that there are many more concepts which would have been relevant, and that many more points could have been made about the concepts which were considered; but the important thing about philosophical pursuits of this kind is, I am inclined to think, to know when to stop; and, as Peter Geach says in another context, "although there is much more to say on the problems raised in this work, I am going to stop here."

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